

The Crooked Path

ISSN 1945-0621

A Journal of the Nameless Art

Issue 8 - Summer 2014

featuring the work of...

Robin Artisson

Hunting the Lion's Tooth

Stacey Carroll

Walking the Green Path

Peter Paddon

The Power of Masks

Tony Mierzwicki

*Interview with
Janet Farrar and
Gavin Bone*

Lee Morgan

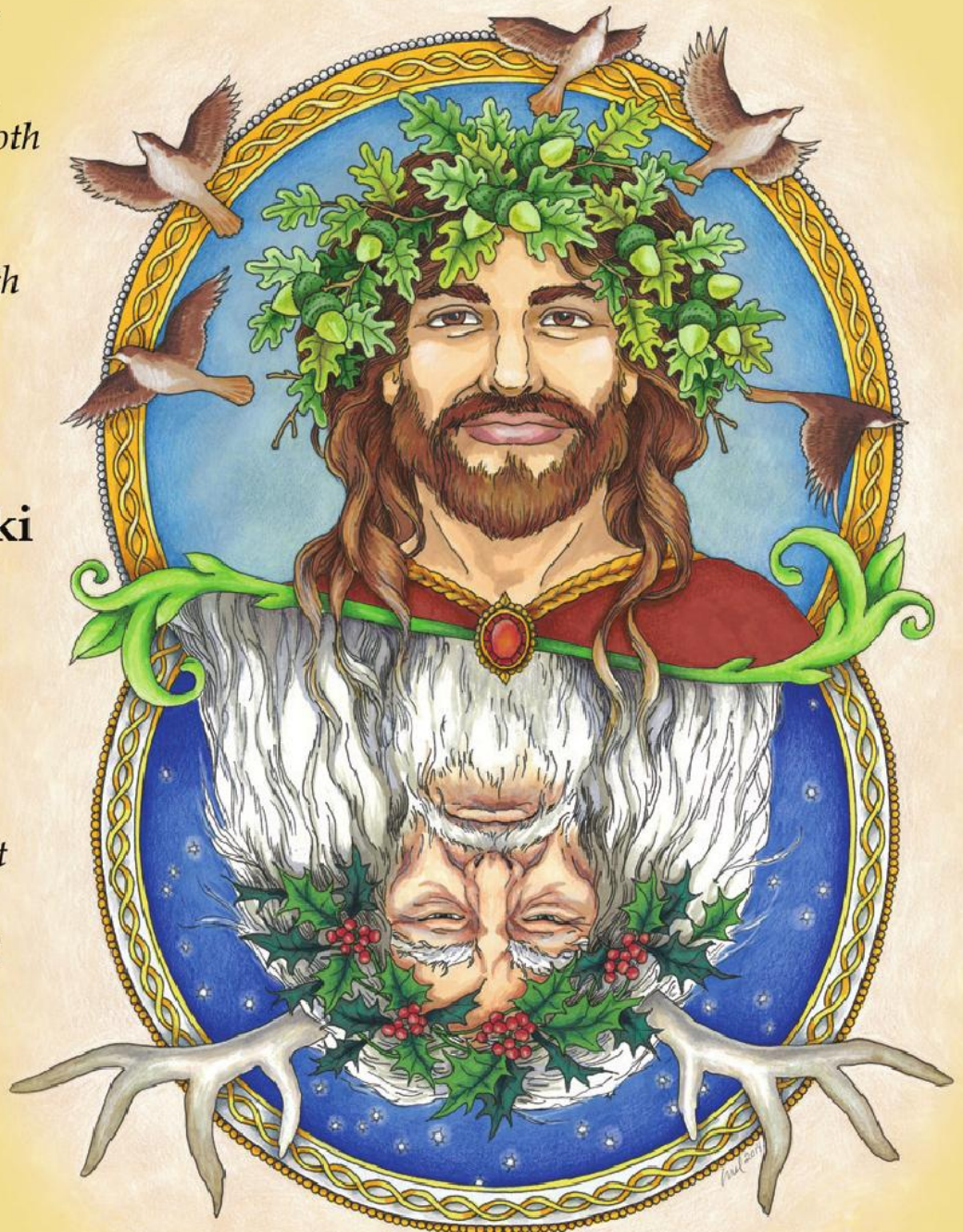
*Crafting the Fetch
and the Witches' Flight*

Raven Womack

*From the archives:
Turning the Hand
of Fate*

Artist Spotlight:

Holly DeFount



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The Crooked Path Journal is a quarterly magazine for Traditional Witches, Cunningfolk, and other practitioners of the Nameless Art. **All contents © 2014 Pendraig Publishing**



A Letter From the Editor-in-Chief

It has been a while since an issue of the *Journal* has come out. There has been a lot going on, and life – and near death – got in the way. But the time has come to brush the dust off and see if we can fire up some interest in the Nameless Art once more.

This time, I'm not alone. In fact, most of the heavy-lifting has been done by Christopher Michael and Monica Castillo. I have to admit I am impressed by both their passion and their ability: they have persuaded, bribed or put the 'fluence on people to write great articles, and the cover art by Holly DeFount is nothing short of magnificent! So I am happy to let them take over as editors of my little baby, secure in the knowledge that it is in good hands. I will continue to be involved in the process, as chief editor, but I think the *Journal* will see a new blossoming under their tender care and that makes me happy.

We have big plans for the *Journal*, but to achieve them we need your support. First – and easiest – is to get the word out and increase the readership. We want to introduce select advertisements to help keep the price down as the *Journal* gets larger, and we want more articles by more writers. So if you have something to say about Traditional Witchcraft, why not write it down and send it in? You can attach article to private messages on the *Journal's* Facebook page, or email us at submissions@pendraigpublishing.com.

Bendith,

Peter Paddon



Sun on the Ground: Hunting the Lion's Tooth

Robin Artisson

Editors Note: This article was written around the time of the Spring Equinox; however, due to the content and quality of information, The Crooked Path Journal has decided to include it in our summer issue.

Spring is here - and the eye of the sun is opening on the ground, everywhere. I don't mean the sun in the sky: I mean the being far below the sun that resembles the sun in every way: the Dandelion flower. But there are many reasons why the little golden sun of the dandelion flower and the bright sun in the sky are alike; both start to shed their golden gift around the same time of year, and both are rich sources of vitamin D, the anti-depression (or at least anti-seasonal affective depression) vitamin.

But the entire dandelion plant - not just the marvelous blossom - is completely nutritious; every part: the flower, the leaves, the stem, and the taproot. Dandelion has no poisonous look-alikes, either, so you don't have to worry about playing "Forager Roulette."

There's more than just nutrition here; there is a deep spiritual power at work. Dandelions grow everywhere- and are considered (horrifically) by our unwise modern folk to be "weeds." But no weed ever gave so much to the world- every part of the plant swims with vitamins B1, B2, B5, B6, B12, C, E, P, D, biotin, inositol, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, and zinc. And it grows everywhere, for free.

If you find that you're the sort of person who is "dragged down" by a sedentary lifestyle, mingled with eating the dismal things we eat these days - which tends to be white-flour laden everything and concentrated sweeteners - this plant will bring you back to life. Just a cup of dandelion tea a day could change everything for you.

The leaves of the plant are more nutritious than is easily imaginable. They are higher in beta-carotene than carrots. Their iron and calcium content is off the chart, even higher than spinach. You can eat the leaves raw, right in salad, and the bitter notes of the leaf (which change as the seasons go) makes any salad better. The tea of dandelion

strengthens the entire body, especially the liver and gall bladder.

It promotes the production and flow of bile, and helps get rid of gallstones. It's good for chronic hepatitis, reduces liver swelling and jaundice, and helps indigestion. The root and leaf tea is a gentle diuretic, too - it improves the way the kidneys clean the blood and recycle nutrients in your body. Unlike pharmaceutical diuretics, dandelion doesn't leech minerals from your body. Health generally improves from kidneys working better, and the skin clears up.

And this just never ends - the milky-white sap you can get from breaking the stems and leaves can help remove warts, moles, pimples, calluses, and sores. It soothes bee stings and blisters. The sun is a great healer- and the dandelion *is* the "sun on the ground."

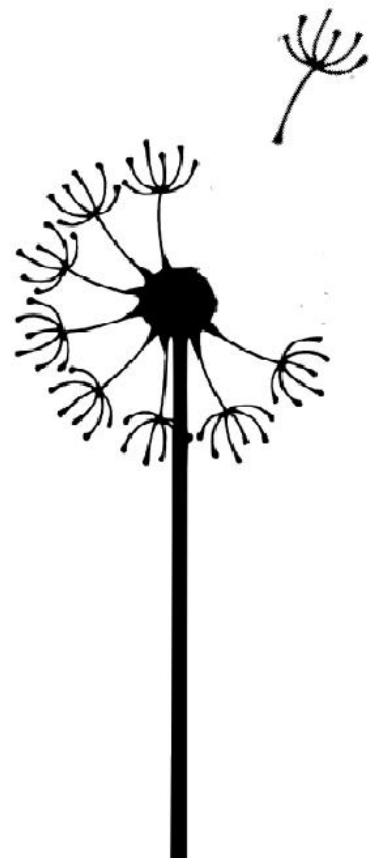


At the beginning of spring, I begin one of the most joyful times of my year - dandelion hunting. The name "dandelion" comes from old French - *dent-de-lion*: the Lion's Tooth. They called it that because of how deeply toothed the leaves are. It's not quite like hunting an actual lion, but it's still a fun and easy hunt.

In the sun-drenched yards and fields of this place - or any place - I walk with my bag or jar and find patches of dandelion. I pluck the wide-open yellow flowers and break away as many leaves as I need - but never too many from any one plant or any one place. The bees need these flowers, too, and there's nothing right or good about taking more than you need. I go patch to patch, taking the flowers randomly, never taking too many. Same with the leaves.

While I was doing this the other day, a spiritual realization of types dawned on me. How strange it is that these plants are just sitting there, and then - due to the benefit I know I can get from them - I am attracted to their yellow beauty. I stalk among them, plucking one here, one there, and then, when I'm gone, so are some of them.

It made me think of death. And despite what people think, the spring equinox - like high summer-tide - is a fine time to think about death, an important time to think about it. Here we humans sit, in our own patches, and strange powers beyond our conception go among us, too - plucking us





here, plucking us there; and when they are gone, so are some of us. I, as the hunter, just randomly picking a dandelion here or there was not unlike the Master Hunter himself - the leader of the Hunt of Souls, who does the same to all living beings.



And it wasn't evil; I wasn't there to disrupt or destroy these beings, only to harvest from them what I needed, what I was attracted to. I came respectfully. So do the death-powers, in their own way, I am sure. We wonder so often about why one human person is spared when another dies - but why did one flower get taken by me, and not another? Even I don't know. I just let my heart and my eyes tell me which to pluck.



That's how life works. I know this in my bones - other forces are at work, quite a bit beyond our easy perception, and that's that. It's not evil, it's not scary, it's not wrong. It's the way of things. There is a "predatory" relationship between what is Seen and what is Unseen - we can no longer deny this - and in the same way that I got a golden treasure of nourishment from these plants, perhaps the death-powers are nourished by us. We know that human hunters are nourished by their prey; I can't see why that should be so different just because a non-human being is involved.

At any rate, here's how you can engage the ritual of the "spring drink" par excellence: gather golden, open dandelion flowers - about 10 per cup of tea you want to make - and break off about 4-5 good toothy green leaves from various plants per cup. The leaves are especially potent with nurturing power.

Take that home, put it in a tall glass with two or so tablespoons of white vinegar and about a cup and a half of water, and shake it for a minute. This cleans it; my "hunts" take me to parks, yards, and road-sides, and so who really wants to get a little dried dog urine from some local neighborhood dog on accident? The vinegar also purifies in other ways, gets rid of tiny bugs that might be in the yield. Then you strain that off.

Then, put just water in the glass and shake for another 30 seconds, to rinse, and then strain that off. Now, put the cleaned flowers and leaves in your cup after first tearing the leaves up - you want them ripped and broken into small pieces - add boiling water, and cover it for 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, strain it, add a teaspoon (or two) of honey, (the honey brings out the subtle dandelion notes), and you have the golden drink of the Eye of the Sun - a restorative, celebratory drink of how bounteous and generous

Mother Green Gown really is. If you had a cup daily, you'd notice the difference quickly. These daily foraging walks I take - my dandelion hunts - are very emotionally profound; they have a restorative affect all their own.

The Ancients of many lands used dandelion for a major food and nutrition source, and we are mad not to. This "weed" cannot be stopped. Each plant can self-fertilize; you can try as hard as you want to stop them from being in a place, and they will continue to reproduce and blossom. And this potent, kind spirit that we experience as a dandelion plant is a true helper to mankind- not just brightening our fields and yards with real beauty, but offering us needed nutrition and healing, all for free, in super-abundant amounts.

Spring doesn't start for me until I drink the golden tea of the dandelion. There are countless recipes that can be found for other ways to eat the plant, outside of salad and tea. Look for them. Fritters can be made from the flowers; the taproot can be cleaned and cooked; and the leaves can be sauteed with butter, garlic, olive oil, and onions, with a touch of wine added right at the end.

But never lose sight of what foraging for this spirit-power really means. It's a celebration of Earth's generosity, and a reminder of how far we've fallen away from seeing the bounty that's all around us. To be able to forage like this, for such good powers, is a healing process all by itself. Keep your eyes on the ground - in the verdure, there are many blessings and many treasures.

For me, spring always first tastes like dandelions. ❖



The Incidental Tarot

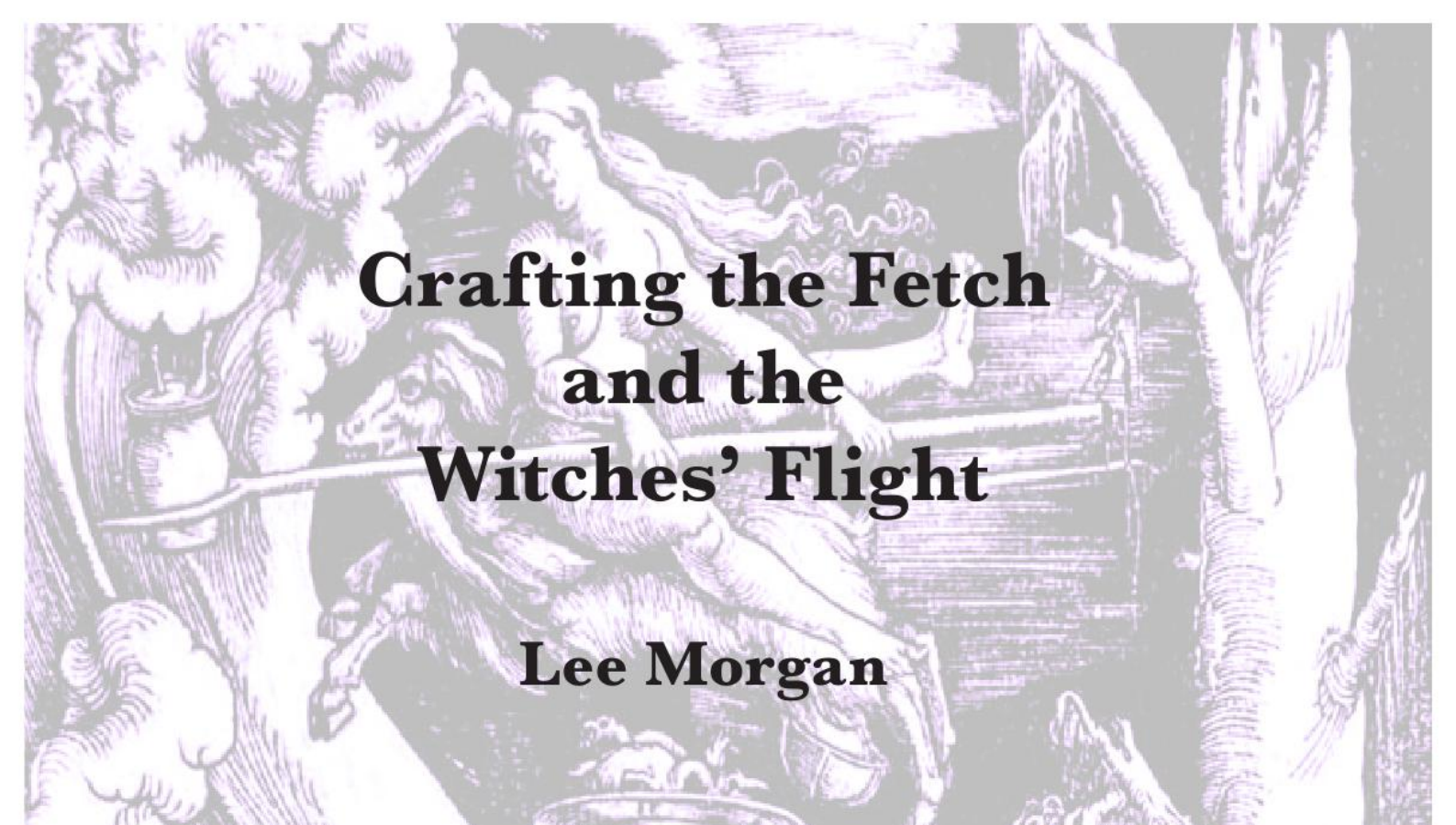
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The images in this deck are profoundly rich and unique, ranging from unconscious archetypes to carefully constructed traditional esoteric images. Arising from a daily artmaking challenge, the Incidental Tarot will inspire you and spark your own intuitive fire!



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Crafting the Fetch and the Witches' Flight

Lee Morgan

The story is as ancient as it is modern and immediate. The witch, lying still as the grave, still like a mere wooden poppet of herself, arms folded across the chest, on the bed...the shadow comes forth from the mouth and nose like a black mist which slowly brews and coagulates into a 'double' of the witch. This other subtle body, exuding through the pores as much as the nose and mouth, is full of instinct and cunning, full of black fire. It seeks out the fetch-skin, pulls on its coat of feathers or fur, donning claws or beak by the hearthside.

Perhaps his shadow enters a vessel by the bed and comes out wearing the beast, or a crude ornament that depicts a hare, or instead slips on the second skin of a cat that gently purrs by her beside. The cat will dream she skin-turned into a witch, even as the witch visions the velvet paws and whiskered senses of the feline. Out the window or up the chimney the witch will go, or even through a keyhole. The sabbat awaits.

As the witch journeys he finds that it is not physical space that is covered, but sensory space - the space between the witch's normal daily consciousness and the ability to perceive the Otherness. Some call this experience of the deeper senses slowly coming on inside us "crossing the hedge." The hedge is not just some outer barrier around the town that separates us from the wild outside; it is a barrier in our minds that separates us from the wild within.

I have oftentimes been privileged to play a part in catalyzing such experiences for those who come to me, in whom the latent witch-blood already simmers with suppressed heat. And in so doing I have often discovered that what I am doing is not so much 'teaching' the person how to send the fetch, but healing the shadow soul, the deep well-springs of the fetch that lives in the blood and is fed by our genetic heritage, the root system of our ancestors in the Underworld that nourishes our fetch everyday. The shadow-double, the part of us that wears the skins of beasts, is home of our primal force, our livingness, the raw feral glory of our humanity. This part above all aspects of the self is brutally suppressed by modern Western lifestyles.

For this reason most of what I have to do to clear the way between a latent witch and the fetch riding experience, is healing. I begin with suggesting we break the habit of letting out bodies rhythms be determined always by electric lighting. That we sit with darkness, with twilight and allow our minds time to wander without the bright artificial illumination, which keeps our daily consciousness always trained to high-beam alertness.

I will then suggest different ways that the person can start listening to the subtle voices of the body, the wordless voices that constitute the expressed wishes of the shadow. The shadow that emerges as our untamed double may already have a bestial fetch form it chooses to wear. This animal skin will express and also be evidence of the particular power and wisdom to which the shadow has access. But to mentally obsess over discovering the identity of this animal or animals is to miss the subtle power altogether. The form will come

naturally once you understand the nature of the shadow - that some simply call 'fetch' and others refer to as the 'black soul'.

The shadow lives immersed in all of the physical processes and emotions of which you are not consciously aware. Much apparent psychic phenomenon consists of the sudden availability of facts that were missed by the conscious mind, but the shadow perceived and stored. The shadow has access to everything that is in your blood, your ancestral memories, and also picks up a whole array of sensory information that your conscious mind doesn't register. The witch and his shadow have a close relationship; this is why a witch is cunning. When the shadow dons the fetch skin of an animal, it also becomes able to draw on the collective wisdom and talents of that creature. This is all part of the primordial natural magic of the human animal, part of our inherently mercurial nature.

So if we are to reconnect with the shadow of ourselves that emerges to fill the fetch and fly, we need to become more aware of our senses. This is a prime reason why our modern lifestyles do not promote fetch activity. Many of the sounds of modern life are grating and we try as much as possible to block them out. Many of the jobs we work do not stimulate our senses and our senses begin to numb out and shut down to manage the lack of visual, aural, tactile and scent stimulation. Contrast the average office or retail job, undertaken under electric lighting with air conditioners going in the same room for most of the day, with the work our ancestors once did out of doors, interacting with others, hearing bird calls, smelling fields and woodlands, the environment regularly changing and their

body often engaged in physical labor.

Today many of the activities that are helpful 'soul food' to the fetch have been replaced by conveniences, so we do not regularly get the time for repetitive tasks like knitting, spinning, carving, or dough kneading. There is something about any practice that involves weaving or knitting threads that seems to help to 're-knit' the soul as well as a blanket. For the shadow-double to be strong enough, vital enough, to express itself in a fetch beast form it needs activities that feed it. And it likes to feed on your sweat and physical exertion. It feeds on time spent flowing through your body when your conscious mind has relinquished control of the reins for a short time, letting it run. Without this strengthening, this healing, it is unlikely that the shadow will ever be



plump and ripe enough to fill out the skin of a noble spirit beast.

First we need darkness, we need time spent not thinking with the front of our brains, we need the loosening of self consciousness and the attendant liberation that the fetch (as activated shadow) can bring us, we need to be rooted down into our senses. Memories will rise to the surface, especially while dancing, running or lifting weights, during those moments where we're 'in the zone' and are letting the fetch run. –Memories that will show and remind us how this part of our self came to be damaged in the first place. It is best not to pick over these clues that emerge, or focus on them, just acknowledge them. Tell the wild parts of yourself that you see and acknowledge how they were injured and you see and acknowledge where they were hurt. Often the damage is right in the center and root of the fetch's power, the sexual instinct so often hedged around with shame or trauma.

Remember that this part of you is wild, it doesn't want to be molly-coddled or named a victim, it is fierce and it heals itself in fire, not only in the water of tears. It is through giving both voice and action to the shadow that it can be made potent. The raw force that makes a witch a witch is a strong shadow and consequently a strong fetch. So if you are destined to slide blackly out of the mouth of a wooden copy of yourself and wear the skin of the beast it will not take terribly long of listening to your senses, letting the animal in you run and sitting with darkness before you will feel it stirring. It may feel like sexual arousal or emotional arousal, it should feel a little like fear, or awe, like all the things that make your hairs stand on end. These

are signs that the shadow is strong, that its black fire moves potently in you: strong sex, strong heart, vivid emotions, quick adrenal responses to fear, ability to experience awe, ability to feel mixed states of arousal that contain combinations of all of the above. When you have those things seething in you the form of the beast you are to wear will rise to the surface on those twilight waters. It will wordlessly tell you something about what kind of witch you are.

The most important step in discovering the skin that will give you power, is to find a state of non-judgment that goes beyond the

There is power in every animal skin, power that can only be known by seeing how mouse sees with her mouse eyes and feels with her mouse nose, not through some human idea of what value each animal species has from our perspective.

Once you have seized this vision of form, you may like to find or construct a vessel in the shape of that animal. Some witches prefer a bottle of some kind into which offerings can be dripped, other prefer a statue shaped like the animal or a fetish constructed from the bones, horn, fur or feathers of the beast.

There is power in every animal skin, power that can only be known by seeing how mouse sees with her mouse eyes and feels with her mouse nose, not through some human idea of what value each animal species has from our perspective.

mere image of things. You must request the revelation from your own deep shadow-mind in good faith. This means without hope or expectation and without the anthropocentric ideals that we regularly project onto animals. The part of you that wants the fetch beast to be something that your conscious mind finds powerful and impressive, like a wolf, is the part of you that must fall silent for this work to happen with any depth and truth. This part of you that has all these ideas and wants and preferences, that has socially conditioned ideas that mice and rats are less 'impressive' and therefore less powerful than tigers and eagles, is the part of you that has been unconsciously abusing and repressing the shadow that your inner witch lies waiting in.

Remember that this fetch beast form is the ultimate of liminal beings. It is at once a skin for your shadow, (that mist of the blood that is your deep soul's essence and is fed constantly by the ancestors), yet it is also the group essence of the animal form that has chosen you. In itself this alchemic marriage, this coming together of two fertile forces, one totemic, the other ancestral in origin, we are witnessing the crossing of two rivers that already have a long history with each other. And in so doing we are remembering how our own species is constantly interpenetrated by the souls of other creatures who can both help or hinder us. There are no impenetrable barriers around the edges of who we are as humans.

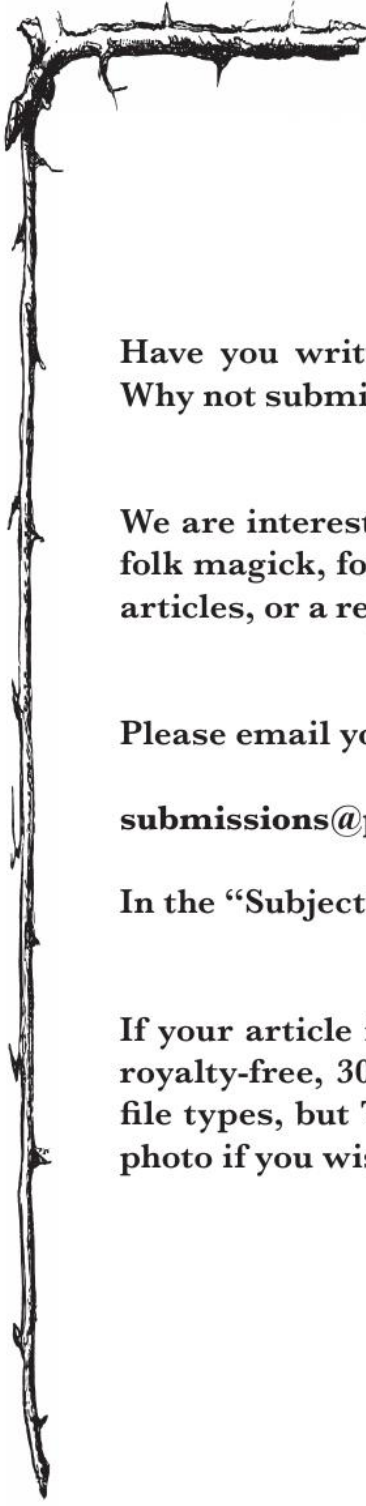
Whilst offerings of alcoholic spirits like whiskey or rum, the remains of the Red Meal or even drops of blood have always been received well by the fetch in its vessel, the best food for the fetch is to be filled with your shadow. Wearing the skin regularly, to fly or run as the beast, is what helps to build up the power and ease of moving in that form. Although of course your shadow can go out alone, simply moving as itself, there is a greater visceral intensity in donning the fetch skin. –An opening of the deep senses, the Underworld senses, which allow us to feel and know the Other and its nether realms in a much more physical-feeling way than when we move as pure shadow. Also it seems to protect the shadow slightly if injury should occur to us in flight.

What I call the flight of the shadow, the shadow-double of a person, is probably not too much different to what some people call ‘astral travel’. The difference is visceral but it is also in what wearing the skin of beasts allows us

to do when we are out and about. Witches are not just known for leaving their bodies and flying through the air, we are known for being able to project visible spectral doubles or appear as animals, for healing, seducing, or hag-riding other sleepers, meeting with at the sabbat, receiving magical knowledge from the Witch Father, and interacting with non-human others. The experience of ‘astral travel’ is potentised when the shadow of a witch fills the fetch, the fetch is a bridge to the experience of the Eternal Sabbat. The difference between astral travel and witch flight is the difference between a mystical experience and a sorcerously potent action, which is also a mystical experience. We move, when we ride the fetch, into the potential for shared ecstatic experience with other practitioners, and we slide effortlessly into a groove worn in by hundreds of others who have crossed the hedge before us. ❖

Lee Morgan, author of *A Deed Without a Name* and *Wooing the Echo* is a British ex-pat currently living at the bottom of the world in Van Diemen’s Land, with a partner and two sons. Lee’s writing has been published internationally in the fields of short fiction, poetry and non-fiction. After many years in the occult and pagan scene Lee has now served in a magisterial role for over a decade, and in the Hethite Thread of Witchcraft in the broader, international scene. More recently Lee studied core shamanism to an advanced level with Michael Harner’s ‘Foundation for Shamanic Studies’.





Writers and Authors - A Call for Submissions

Have you written an article pertaining to Traditional Crafters?
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We are interested in anything relevant to non-Wiccan witchcraft -
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articles, or a regular recurring column.

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In the “Subject” area, please write “Journal Submission.”

If your article includes images, please ensure that all images are
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Walking the Green Path

Stacey Carroll

The thicket ahead obscures the path. What lies beyond? What wonders will I behold? As I peek through I see nothing but darkness, no road, no path. Why does it hide from me? Why can I not see what lies beyond the hedge? Deep breath, eyes focused, hands move into the bracken to part the way. The thorns gash deeply and I bleed. The ground drinks it up, I watch as part of my spirit is taken into the richly dark loam. A gentle light touches upon my eyes, the road is starting to reveal itself, the soft green grass, the towering trees, it is all part of the path I must walk. I look to my hands, my arms, the wounds have healed and the bracken has parted. The sacrifice is paid and I am able to journey forward.....

This was the first time I ever crossed the hedge. I approached it with an arrogance and expectation. I applied my flying ointment, listened to some drumming and waited for the amazing journey to begin. It didn't. In fact it took a long while before anything happened. Then the bracken hedge appeared. It was apparent that before I could go anywhere, a sacrifice was required, an understanding of what was to come and the price to be paid. It knocked the arrogance right out of me. You see, the thing I learned most from this very first journey was that to approach it with anything other than humility and openness was to deny yourself any sort of truthful experience. Afterward, it was an incredible journey, the insights and visions I still am trying to decipher to this day. Some of it made sense, some of it still lingers unresolved within my mind.

I learned much this night, most of all, I learned that claiming the title 'hedge witch' was not something one should do unless willing to entirely become and own being a hedge witch. From this, my path has grown, my understanding of the direction of my path has changed and who I am core-deep will never be the same. I learned a respect for the wild things out there and rediscovered my love of all things green. I discovered the Green Path, a woven tale that came to mind one day, pushing through the barriers of my subconscious into my conscious, demanding to be heard, demanding to be written. I'm not anyone special, I'm a herbalist, a writer, a witch, an everyday person – but something in the darkened wild called to me from the shadows. It wanted to be heard, it wanted the voice of the forests and woods heard.

It was a curious thing because I live in the country, expansive, pastoral country. No forest or woods near my front door; the spirits of this place cared not for that particular detail. It almost didn't exist to their way of thinking; then I understood. It is not necessarily of place, but of the places within us. Our own psyche holds the key to our spiritual evolution and communion



with the beings of the Earth. Our psyche is where we first go when discovering our spiritual nature. There is a longing in our souls for something that resonates, finding it truly becomes an experience meant only for one. It sets the road, lays the foundations. It is not a straight road, it is a crooked one with no right or wrong way but a learning hike through all sorts of terrain. I have faced only the surface of the journey I am to have, the path I am to walk. I fear it because it is unknown and it will require from me parts of myself I may not wish to give or part from.

The Green Path is a rocky road; there are potholes, bumps, thorns, stones and bones. There is blood, sacrifice and a tearing of the understanding of how things are. It is dangerous and painful. It is beautiful, it is life, it is green, it is fertility and it is the lifeblood of the land. So much lies beyond the borders of the conscious mind, so many things remain undiscovered, unimagined, not experienced. So I walk the path I have chosen, the path I am called to. I feel the need to walk, to journey, to create, all in the name of the Green. But what is the Green Path and where does it lead? What does it mean to walk this twisted road? I share with you only what was shared with me, for you must discover on your own what the green means to you.

The Green Path

There is a power in the land, one that runs deep and runs primal. It is voracious, it is strong. It is the blood and bone of the Earth; guarded by beings walking in shadow whilst gathering in the light. The Guardians are those who walk the Green Path, who hold sacred the forests and fields, the brooks and streams, tearing through those who show no respect to the Earth and her inhabitants. These powers walk beyond borders, create the borders, guide wandering souls showing them the darker roads, the green roads, the powerful roads. They do not do so lightly nor do they show just anyone; you must be a willing initiate, giving yourself



over to the powers of the green world. It cannot be done lightly, for it is not a simple matter of partaking on occasion. This path is one you must be committed to, ready to open your soul, your heart, your mind to. Sacrifice may be called upon, laying bare your innermost self to their nature. You cannot hide from them; once they claim you they will know you.

There are no half measures, for the Green world is one that cannot be defined, but it can be experienced. And so too these powers, the Spirits and Gods of the Green world can be experienced. They show their faces in the leaves of a tree, the dew on the flower, the heady scent that permeates the senses as you walk through the garden. The Old Ones, the spirits of the land would speak to you if only you would listen. Their whispers are on the wind, their spirit flows through the trees, the grasses, the streams; they wait on this side of the hedge and at the same time they stand beyond this world on the other side of the hedge, ready to take you on a journey. They are in the very core of our being; they know who we are before we do, can sense our intent before we have formed it, know our hearts and act accordingly. Do you speak to your plants? Do you hear their voices answering? Can you hold out your hand and feel the energy pouring forth from the leaf before you? Do you know the intent of the plant? Can you hear it singing to you? You have to be sure before you step into the green world for the shadows will devour you even as the light shows you the way.

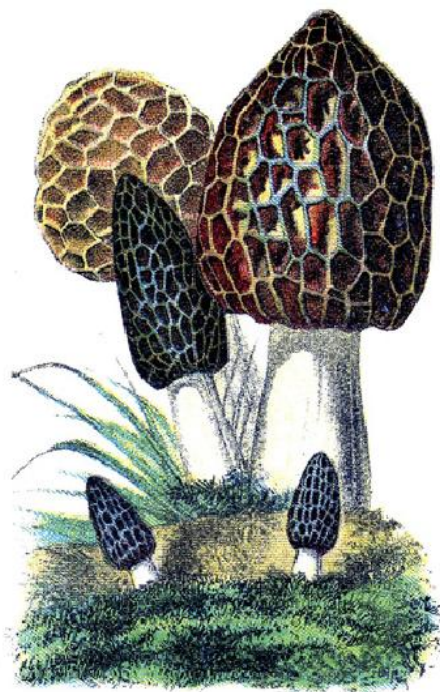
Who exists within the green? The Wild Spirits, those without names, from no pantheon roam the green world, here in our world, just outside of our world, straddling the veil, holding the very power of the green world in their hands. Do these powerful beings have names? No. They are the Green Woman, the Green Man, the Lord of the Wild Hunt, The Lady of the Forest; the truth of who they are remains hidden, to be experienced when the green world touches your own. They are the Old Ones, before time, before speech, who created the pathways of the

land, who tend the energy within the soil beneath our feet, who tremble the earth and flood the plains, who can give and take on a whim, who grow the forests to hide their kin and to give free roam to the creatures who thrive and survive within the green.

Do they walk behind us, with us, in us? They are primal, powerful and ancient. They are who we seek when we walk the green path. They are the Healers, the Poisoners, the Land and the Heart. They walk with us, within us and with-out us. They are the Eternal Gardeners who will tend the Green World for time immemorial, who will walk always upon this Earth long after we are all but ash and bone. Have care when walking in the Green World, have care for if you misstep the Spirits, the Nameless Ones, the ancient beings of the green will tear you down, tear you apart and send you on your way. Show them respect and they will share with you their energies, their powers and their gifts, creating a powerful Green One who will know their world and feel at home in their domain, forever a caretaker of the land, forever a caretaker of the green. ❖

***Stacey Carroll** is a green path hedge witch, certified herbalist, mad gardener, initiated HP, big book lover and tarot/oracle enthusiast. Living in the country, she has walked the winding roads of the mystic and witch from a young age, seeking out the hidden places where beings of the green and wild dwell.*

<http://thecountrywitchscottage.weebly.com/>

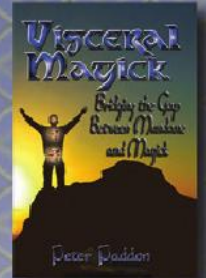
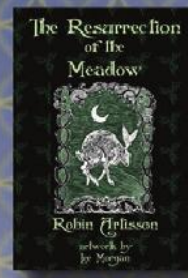
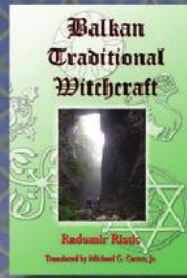
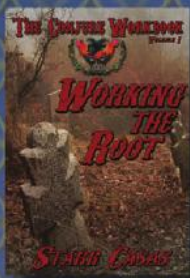


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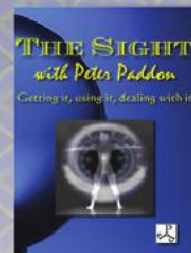
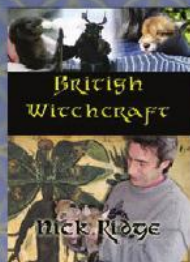


Publishing

A new look at an Old Path

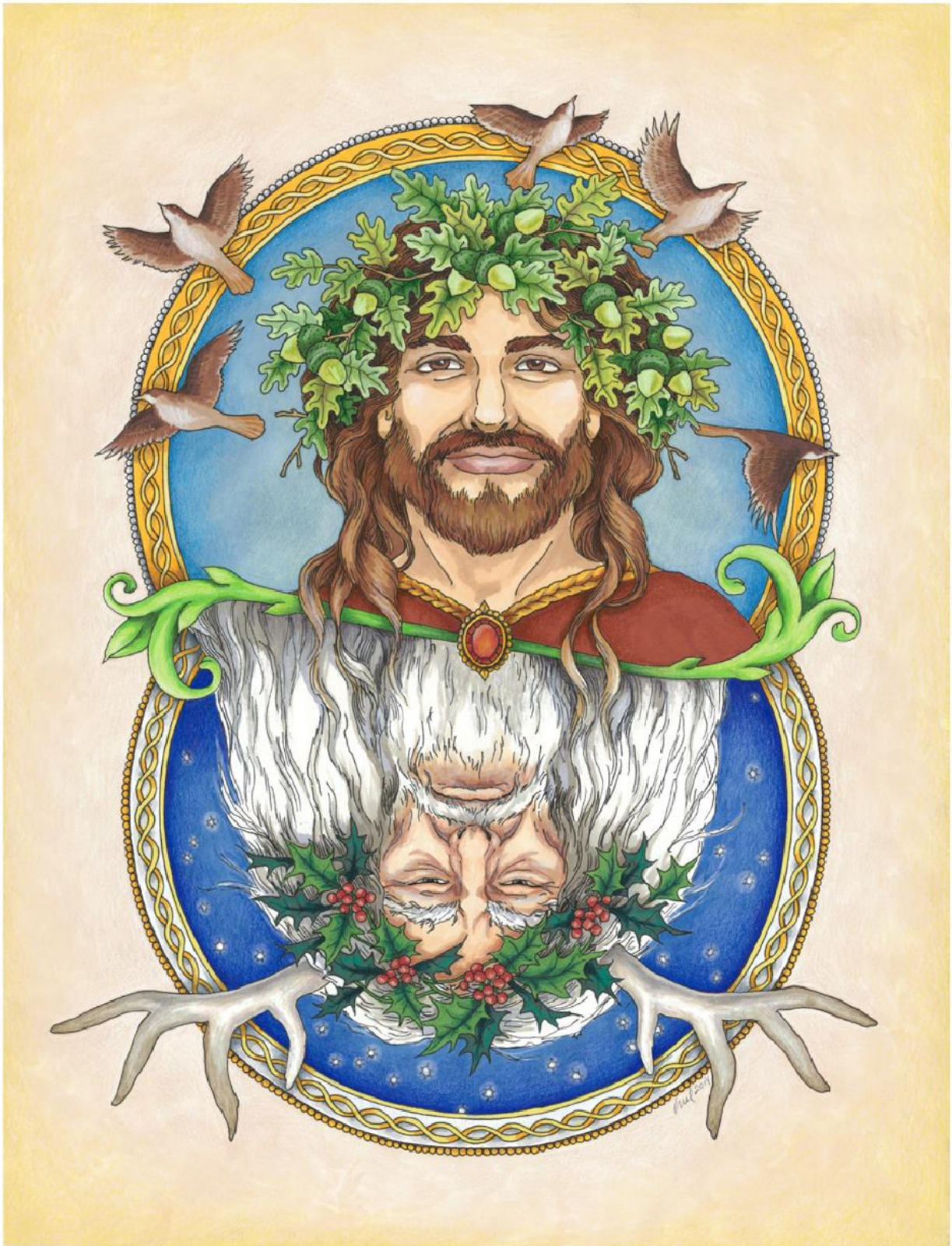


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THE CROOKED PATH JOURNAL ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Holly DeFount

In a new quarterly feature, The Crooked Path Journal will spotlight an innovative artist within the pagan community. For this issue, we sat down with Holly DeFount, creator of the extremely popular Incidental Tarot, and discussed her background, artistic processes, and new projects on the horizon.

CP: Holly, thanks so much for taking the time to chat with us. First off, tell us a little bit about your background and how you began as an artist.

HD: Well, I have been an artist since I was able to pick up a crayon. As a child, my play almost always involved making things. I remember making Barbie furniture from a bucket of wood scraps and a hammer and nails that my dad gave me. I absolutely loved Wonder Woman, and I made myself paper wrist cuffs and tiara-my first cosplay! I can even remember making myself a life-size pair of paper bird wings to wear. Drawing, painting, carving, building...that's just how I rolled. When I got older I taught myself how to draw photo-realistic images, and spent much of my teenage years copying photographs of my musical idols. My portfolio was simply overflowing with Jim Morrison portraits!

Years later after going to art school, I went in the opposite direction and learned the craft of faux-finishing: creating the illusion of different textures and stones for walls and interiors. Going from the small scale photo-realistic drawing to large scale painting on walls was a huge step in my creative growth. It really freed my vision and opened up the way I render images. Though I must say, I still have an innate fondness for doing small scale work, hence my Tarot fascination.

CP: Why do you have a fascination for small-scale work, do you think?

HD: I think there is something really precious and mysterious about work in miniature. In many ways, smaller art pieces become like gemstones, drawing your eye down to a fixed point of fascination. They can take on a talismanic quality, being

small enough to carry in a purse or pocket to remind someone of a specific energy or intention. Think of the gilded icons of the Middle Ages, and saints' cards in the modern era. These objects of art are most certainly intended to be magical, to bring the blessings of the saints to the bearer. These kinds of talismans exist in all cultures, whether small carved stone animals, or medicine bags...even tattoos. Art in its broadest sense is quite magical, but when focused with intention becomes even more potent. I hope to bring this same kind of magical potency into our jewelry art as well.

fauna to create more archetypal pictures.

I recently started taking my finished collages to the next level and turned them into fully illustrated pieces; in other words, I take the compositions I create and re-draw them on fine art paper, taking liberties to smooth lines, change shapes, and refine the imagery. Then I color the drawings from scratch, really allowing the central figures to inhabit their space, rather than being stitched into a patchwork of pieces. I find this is a very alchemical process for me... distilling colors, shapes and symbols into new and dynamic scenes. After decades of trying all kinds of different media and

“My visual vocabulary is symbolic and archetypal, because those are the images that speak to me of a larger picture, a truth that is greater than what I can see and perceive with my physical senses.”

CP: What is your artistic process? Where do you derive your inspiration?

techniques, this is the one “process” that really feels like it is all mine.

HD: It's taken me a great many years to realize exactly what “my process” is. I always felt I was really good at crafting or copying, but not so good at creating things directly out of my imagination. In the last few years I've become really enamored of doing collage work as part of my creative process. I have a vast collection of ephemera (magazines, calendars, cards, decorative papers) that I draw from in creating my compositions. I look for colors, textures and shapes that resonate with each other, and I combine these with figures, flora and

My inspiration comes from nature, magic, mythology...especially goddess imagery and animals. I also have an obsessive interest in decorative art, from illuminated manuscripts to antique textiles to architectural friezes. I've never met an acanthus border I didn't like!

CP:: How do you incorporate your spirituality into your work? How large a part does spirituality factor into your work?

HD: Spirituality is the essence of my work. Even if it does not seem obvious to the observer (though I do think it is somewhat obvious in most of my work), I see beauty as a primary manifestation of Spirit. My visual vocabulary is symbolic and archetypal, because those are the images that speak to me of a larger picture, a truth that is greater than what I can see and perceive with my physical senses.

CP: Would you say that when you're creating artwork, you're doing magical crafting? Do you ever do this specifically? When I was in art school, I had a painting teacher that ever so briefly touched on the

idea of painting in order to manifest some quality or desire. I never forgot that, and being very magically centered myself, I incorporated that idea into much of my personal work over the years. The art of collaging or making "vision boards" illustrates exactly this kind of technique. I actually led a workshop at Pantheon a couple of years ago called "Making Art, Manifesting Magic." In it we explored ways of channeling intention into a piece of art for magical work. The workshop was so full I had to turn a lot of people away; I think we all had quite a great time making magic together, even in that limited space and time.

The Incidental Tarot





The Incidental Tarot

Art is my vehicle for communing with Spirit, which is probably why I fell in love the Tarot in my teens. Tarot is such a rich visual and symbolic language--and one that I never tire of. I imagine that's why so much of my work reminds people of Tarot.

CP: Speaking of Tarot, can you tell us a bit about the evolution of *The Incidental Tarot*? You did a sketch a day for a year?

HD: Yes. I did one small piece of art every day for all of 2011. Oddly enough,

the impetus for the challenge was inspired by "NaNoWriMo" — National Novel Writing Month. I participated in NaNo in November of 2010, and I was so surprised and delighted by my achievement of writing 50,000 words, I decided I should challenge myself in visual art. But instead of a month, I went for an entire year. I chose the ACEO format (Artist Cards Editions and Originals), a trading card size discipline that made my daily drawings

almost immediately begin to resemble the Tarot. I shared them on Facebook and after a couple of months, people were enthusiastically calling for me to create an actual Tarot deck. I ruminated on it a bit, and realized that the project had taken on a life of its own. It hit me one day in the spring - *The Incidental Tarot*. A project within a project...the rest is history!

CP: So the original images for *The Incidental Tarot* were created on actual card-sized canvases (for lack of a better word)?

HD: Yes, I drew each one on a 2.5" x 3.5" piece of art paper. The whole 2011 art-a-day project was this miniature-sized media, so all of them tended to have a kind of talismanic quality to them, even when I was consciously shying away from Tarot imagery.

CP: *The Incidental Tarot* has gotten quite a bit of praise, yes?

HD: I do think it was pretty well received, especially given the way in which it was presented to the public. I might be wrong about this, but I think *The Incidental Tarot* may have been the first Tarot project that was totally crowdfunded and revealed card by card online, within the space of about 5 months. Once the project really got rolling, I tried to give my Facebook fans some input on the decisions I made for various things, like the suits for the Minor Arcana and the card back design. It felt like a collaborative project in many ways,



and I think people really appreciated that aspect of it.

CP: You have a new outlet for your art – jewelry design. What prompted that venture?

HD: As I mentioned before, I've always just "made things." I've actually dabbled

in jewelry making over the years, but when I met my husband (who is a designer and silversmith) the jewelry collaboration seemed inevitable. We've worked together on jewelry designs here and there over the last 5 years, but officially opened up shop as a partnership at the beginning of 2014. Our company is called "Arabesque," after our mutual love of classical decorative design elements, and also the reference to dance and musical composition. My husband is a dancer, and the iconic Arabesque ballet pose was the icing on the cake for him, so to speak. This year I'm directing most of my creative energy to Arabesque, though I'm still working on my painting and illustration as time allows. <http://designarabesque.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/designarabesque>

CP: Other than illustration, what are your favorite pastimes?

HD: Pastimes. Well, I guess it's not

really a surprise, but most of my pastimes are creative in one way or another. I love to write, and have been working on two novels, which I hope to someday conquer and publish. I've also written a couple of short stories, but so far I've been too shy to present them for publication. I sure would like to change that, though! I like to call my writing genre "mythorealism." It's sort of like fantasy or speculative fiction, but I really try to ground my "fantasy" in history, mythology and science--I want it to be totally believable in the world we live in. My first novel is a story about the Morrigan of Celtic mythology. This epic has been rolling around in my consciousness for over 10 years now, and although it's about 2/3 finished – She will not to be rushed! My other story is a Young Adult novel about werewolves. I think this one is more likely to be finished before the other, but you never know.

I also love history. I cut my teeth performing at the Renaissance Pleasure



COLUMBIA RISING Revisioning the American Goddess

Faire at Blackpoint in Northern California back in the 90s, and have been a part of that living history/theatrical community ever since. I am also learning how to dance, through the patience and grace of my dear husband (who can dance with style to pretty much anything). We've been taking tango lessons for about a year and I love learning the language of movement between partners. Tango is rather unlike any other social dance and has a steep learning curve, but we are really enjoying it! The first dance we did at our wedding last year was a Tango that we rehearsed for several months.

CP: Other than your jewelry design, do you have anything in the works that you'd like to share with our readers?

HD: Actually I do have another pretty big project I'm working on concurrently with all the other hats I wear. It's called "Columbia Rising," and it's a collaborative art project re-imagining the American

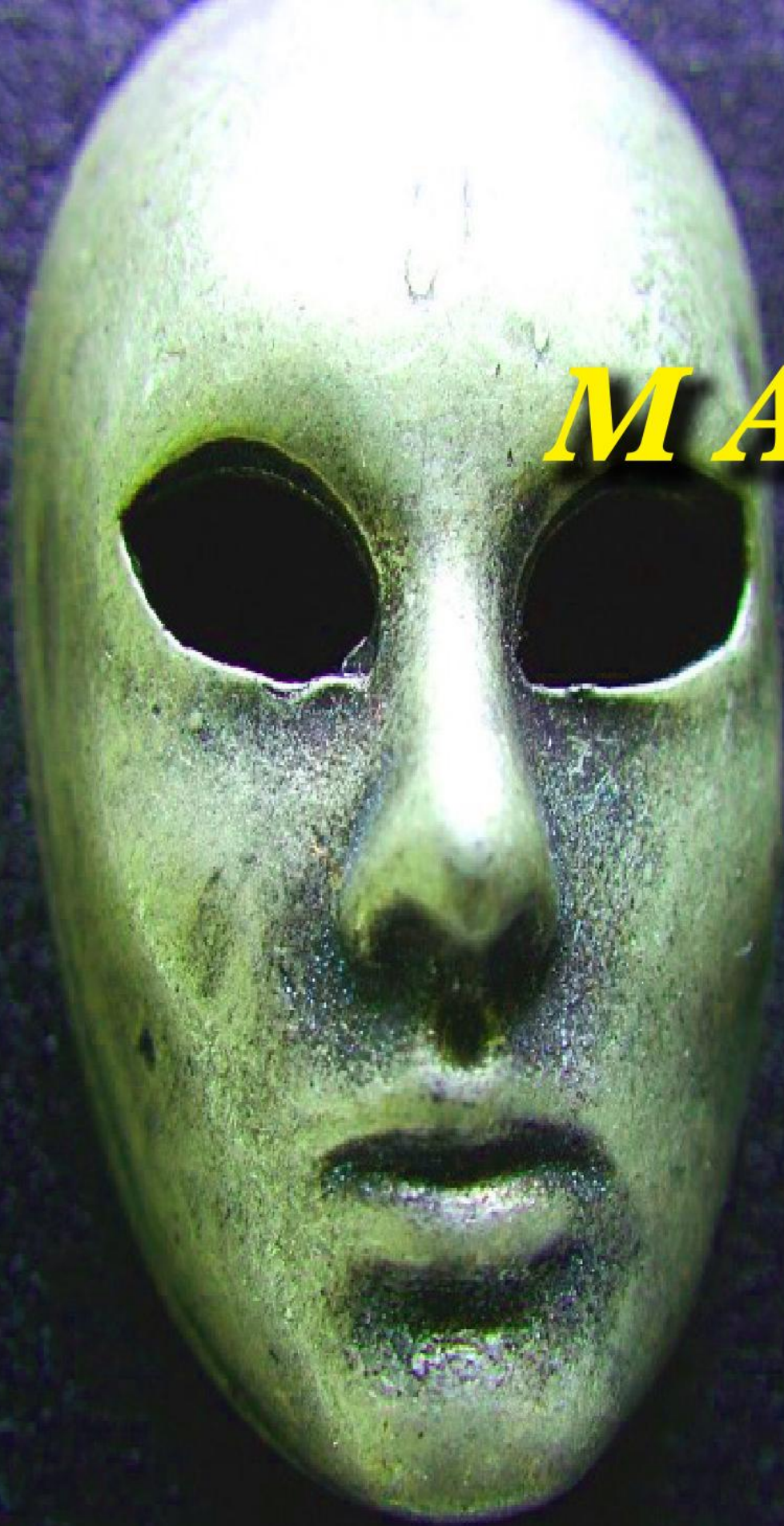
Goddess. It began in 2012, with all the election-year fervor and the seemingly daily news of right-wing assaults on women's rights. I started to wonder what it would be like if we recognized a feminine incarnation of America as a protector, guide and role model...and I wondered what would she look like, what would her symbols be? The idea caught on, and with the help of some friends I started the Columbia Rising website and blog. This summer we are having our first exhibit at The Hub Vallejo, a community arts center and gallery here in the Bay Area. I hope the project continues to evolve beyond the exhibit, and we're very open to new participants/writers and artists who want to join the community! ❖



Holly DeFount earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the California College of Arts & Crafts (now known as California College of the Arts) in 1996 with a focus on painting and printmaking and has been blogging and writing fiction since 2003. She currently lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband (and partner in love, jewelry and adventure) Joshua and their princess of a blue-eyed cat, Sapphire.

<https://www.facebook.com/RavenandRose>
<http://columbiarising.com>

The Crooked Path Journal would like to thank Holly for her beautiful cover artwork and for taking the time to grant us this interview.



The
POWER
of
MASKS

Peter Paddon

The Power of Masks

Excerpt from

“Practical Guising:

The Witch’s Art of Making and Using Ritual Masks”

by Peter Paddon

soon to be available from Pendraig Publishing

Masks have always held a fascination far beyond their function and form, in much the same way a clothed person in a room full of naked people will draw every eye to them. There is a mystique, a glamour in the wearing of a mask that imbues the wearer with real power.

First of all, there is the glamour of the unknown. A person wearing a mask is often anonymous; we cannot see who they are, unless they are easily recognized from their physique. This is a real power of guising, in which the identity of the practitioner is subsumed by the identity of the role assumed with the mask. This potent power is used very effectively in the performances of the Commedia del Arte, where each character has a unique defining mask that both reveals the character’s nature, and conceals that of the performer.

But it is not only the identity of the wearer that is concealed. Most traditional masks are relatively inflexible, and are worn over the face rather than attached to it. Unlike the modern prosthetic make-up used in special effects for movies and theater, traditional masks do not naturally convey the emotions of the wearer, but instead the guiser performs the emotions they desire to portray through head movement and body gesture. The nature of this stylized performance, while it can be extremely effective, does lend itself to the concealment of the artist’s true feelings. A skilled artist can learn to be spontaneous in their performance, and a magical practitioner can even find themselves unconsciously working with – and transcending – the limitations of the mask’s emotional range, but for the most part, displayed emotions are premeditated.

Ritual masks are usually designed to catch the attention. They are often elaborate,

stylized, and can often tell a story through their design alone. The classical No masks of Japan and the characters of the Commedia del Arte give us a lot of information about the characters they represent, before the actor even puts them on. A combination of designs that incorporate traditional “signature” features of the character with the conscious use of symbolism and other non-verbal cues available to magical practitioners, enables spectators or ritual participants to bypass the need for an introduction – when the antlered majesty of Herne enters the ritual space, nobody is in any doubt that the Master of the Wild has arrived.

So the use of masks gives the practitioner a “head-start” in becoming the animal, character, spirit or deity they are seeking to present. When you add the potent magical techniques of enchantment, possession, and energy manipulation to the mix, then the world-between-worlds that is the ritual space truly becomes a venue for real magick. But this effect is not just for the onlookers. It is the guiser themselves who is most affected, most transformed by this combination of tool and technique.

Sometimes masks will incorporate design features that assist in the techniques being used, such as the air-restriction and carefully placed Lapis Lazuli in the death masks of the Egyptian

“...all masks profoundly affect the wearer, at every level that the wearer allows it, and there is a transcendent quality to this effect.”

Mysteries. But all masks profoundly affect the wearer, at every level that the wearer allows it, and there is a transcendent quality to this effect. By wearing the ritual mask, we help ourselves become aware that it is not the only mask we wear. The transformation enabled by the form of the mask reminds us that our own appearance and identity is nothing more than another mask that we peer through to experience the manifest universe. This act of making us aware that the quintessential “something” that is who we truly are – that divine spark of “us” – is not the physical form we wear, makes it easier for us to free ourselves from the restrictions of our mundane identities, and to enter the trance state and move between the worlds. It also enables us to realize that because the façade we present the world is not us, it can be changed, and this is a realization that, even if only indulged in at the psychological level, becomes truly freeing for us. Imagine the possibilities if that realization is carried through the subtle bodies and allowed to permeate every level of our being. For every level is itself a mask, and therefore subject to transformation and control. In the end, we are the divine spark, and everything else is our creation, and therefore is ours to change.

The anonymity afforded by a mask is also very empowering at all levels. We only have to look at the bravado demonstrated every day on the internet by those who hide behind the

façade of an untraceable username. In this case, that bravado is often used to allow the expression of intolerance and cruelty – humanity is, after all, just another primate, prone to flinging poo. But that anonymity can also afford a more enlightened soul to practice acts of charity, of kindness, to transcend the limitations of one's station in life. The mask of the Sacred King can grant the poorest of practitioner the nobility of his own sovereignty, to become in every true way, king for a day. The facility of the mask also allows the practitioner to lay down the role when the task is completed, and thus avoid the ramifications that would follow from permanently taking up the role. The Sacred King enters the Mound at Samhain, but the one who carries him is able to lay down the mask and the role at the entrance to the Tomb, and not take that fateful, irreversible final step.



Hand-crafted leather masks

It is not for nothing that in some cultures and religions, masks are forbidden. Several branches of Christianity have outlawed the wearing of masks, often citing the inherent deception involved in hiding one's identity, or the archetypal use of masks by criminals. But in truth, the prohibition is much more likely to stem from the danger that, rather than conceal or lose themselves, the wearer of the mask may discover who they really are, and claim their sovereignty instead of surrendering it to the priest or the elders of the community. In many cultures, the Trickster wears a mask, but is it to conceal his nature, or to lead us by example to finding our own true nature? ❖

Peter Paddon is a Brit of Welsh ancestry who lives in Los Angeles with his wife Linda, where he is Magister of Briar Rose, a small Coven of modern Cunningfolk. Aside from being an author, Peter also created the Craftwise series of spellcasting DVDs, and is the host of the Crooked Path Podcast.

Having many years of experience in various forms of Occult Studies, including Alexandrian Wicca, the Egyptian Mysteries, Rosicrucianism and Enochian magick, Peter finally found what he had been looking for all his life in the two Traditional Covens he became a member of in the US. The first was the Roebuck (1734, Clan of Tubal Cain), under Ann and Dave Finnin, and the second was Wildewood Grove (Welsh Celtic Tradition), under its Mistress, Raven Womack.

FROM THE CROOKED PATH ARCHIVES:

Turning the Hand of Fate

Raven Womack



“Turning the hand of Fate” is one way in which I have heard the practice of the cunning arts described. There are definitely many that take this statement very literally. There are those that see Fate as some sort of an unyielding entity or dark power that has preordained all things including how and when each of us will die. Adherents to this school of thought would have us believe that by “turning the hand of Fate” we might well be sealing our own Fate in the process.

The idea of predestination or preordination is a very old one. The theological definition is basically that God - or the Divine, if you will - has foreordained all things. John Calvin and St. Augustine of Hippo believed that the salvation and damnation of all humans was preordained by God. This is a theological philosophy that has influenced many sects of Christianity throughout history. On the surface, at least, this seems like a very poor way to convince people to be good, since it's all already worked out by God. Why struggle against sin if God has already made up His mind? Then again, I am no scholar of Christian thought or theology.

While these two versions of Fate or foreordination are similar, they are not exactly the same. For the Christian that believes in predestination - that's that, there's no arguing with God. For

the crafter that believes in predestination, there is the chance to bargain with Fate for a more desirable outcome. A “deal” can be struck with this dark and resolute power, but breaking a deal such as this will have the direst of consequences.

I recently read a book wherein the author describes a very crafty and cunning way to affect the healing of an ill person. The author lost me, though, when he went on to caution that if the illness and impending death was actually “Fated” then the person who facilitated the healing by craft and conjure could, in fact, be required to pay with their own life to satisfy the debt for cheating Fate. Conversely he went on to explain that another possibility was that healing the dying person, only to forfeit your own life, could actually be the “Fated” outcome.

The way I see it, this school of thought makes no sense at all. As a crafter I do realize that everything has a price and everything has a consequence. If we are honorable and respectful in our arts, then we will be careful to acknowledge the powers that we work with; the price for our crafting is more complicated than a few well thought-out offerings. If we have to worry about forfeiting our life every time we craft or conjure to heal the sick, then it become a bit like playing magickal chicken.

I simply do not believe in some unseen and unyielding entity that will only be sated by taking a life in exchange for the one that has been saved. This superstitious babble seems to be designed to make the crafter seem more important than he or she is; as if at every attempt to heal we are putting ourselves in mortal danger, thereby masking the healer in a veil of mystery and importance due to the inherent danger involved in attempting the healing. Hogwash! Certainly there are times that healing work can take a toll on the healer, but any healer worth their salt knows this and prepares accordingly.

The other reason this school of thought seems ludicrous to me is that if I have to worry at ever turn whether or not my actions are but “the foreordained mastery of the dark and shadowy Fate to bring about my demise,” then I might as well give up now. For that matter, I might as well give up on life in general. In case anybody hasn’t noticed, life is always just a breath away from being over. Perhaps I should ponder whether or not to cross the street, lest Fate wants me to cross the street so that some speeding bus can come around the corner and squish me. How do I know whether or not a limb

from the oak tree in my yard might break off suddenly and smash into my bedroom, killing me as Fate has preordained? We simply cannot live in fear of "Fate" and be productive human beings, not to mention being productive cunning folk.

So, having said all of that, I must say that I do believe that sometimes someone is supposed to die. I do not claim to know why, per se; just that I accept that sometimes the will of the Gods is such. I realize that not all crafters or cunning folk are religious, but I am. I believe in real and living Gods that have a will that is beyond my knowledge or understanding. Rooted in that belief is the knowledge that in Their infinite wisdom, it may be Their will that someone dies or even that some other important - or even seemingly inconsequential - event will take place. In following with that belief is the fact that, no matter how crafty or cunning I am, I cannot thwart the will of the Gods. While it is true that there are many in this world that make it a habit to shake their fists at the Gods, it is as useless as it is pitiful. So, while I do not believe in the forever-insatiable Fate, I do believe that sometimes things are just meant to be. However powerful Fate may be, it apparently can be cheated. The Gods, on the other hand, cannot; so I need not live in fear of cheating them and paying with life.

In my opinion and experience, Fate is truly nothing more than cause and effect. When we choose to take an action, there will be some consequence for that action. The actions that we take and the consequences of those actions may be affected by certain probabilities and likelihoods, but nothing is predestined. As crafters, I believe we must believe in a world of infinite possibilities. If we do not, then much of what we seek to manifest is impossible. The end result cannot be determined until the action that is to cause the end result takes place, and any number of things can effect whether the action will ever take place. Once the action does take place, any number of things can affect the probable outcome.

Cunning folk, at least in my opinion, should never accept the concept of a totally preordained Fate. To accept it is to be bound and ruled by it. I will neither be bound by some fear of punishment for upsetting the preordained order of things, nor will I accept the idea that there is nothing that I can do to change the outcome - no matter how probable it may seem - of any given situation. That flies in the face of being cunning or crafty, doesn't it? That being said, I know that there will be those who will want to split hairs, so I will admit that there will always be the possibility of those situations that

are totally beyond our control or manipulation. Yes, if you throw me off of the Empire State Building, then I would have to admit that the outcome is preordained or Fated. On the other hand, it is not preordained that I will ever go to the Empire State Building. As I have already mentioned, I also accept the fact that the possibility exists that - whatever outcome that I am working towards - will be a moot point if it goes against the will of the Gods. Karma, although an Eastern philosophy, in truth is a type of predestination, yet still in keeping with the philosophy of cause and effect. A person's karma is the rewards and/or punishments that a person will receive in the next life as a result of how they live this life. I am not versed enough in the Eastern religions to know whether or not karma can be cheated, but what I do know is that each person is responsible for their own karma, so I tend to doubt that it can be. In essence, the hand that slaps your face is your own; the only way to stop the slap is to not do whatever it is that requires you to be slapped.

Wyrd is often defined in regular, mundane dictionaries as "Fate" or sometimes "Fate personified." It is not surprising that a not-magickal dictionary would get it wrong, but then again I have known many magickal people that seem to hold this very same misconception. There are definitely those that believe that the concept of the Norns (alternately called "The Fates") weaving a person's Wyrd to be a sort of Northern European Pagan version of the Calvinistic Christian ideas about foreordination, but I submit that they are confused and have not really explored the mysteries of Wyrd. The truth of the waving sisters is that they are constantly weaving. Certainly many things influence how we will act in any given situation, but at any time we may act against our nature or in some other way change the patten that is being woven. We have been given the gift of free will; but if all is preordained, then free will is useless. The threads that the Sisters weave are made up of our ancestry, our personal history and our upbringing, the influences that affect us, and the decisions that we make. While it is true that we cannot change that which has already happened, it is also true that which is yet to happen has not been woven and the weaving cannot be finished until the life is ended.

Not surprisingly, the philosophy of the Wyrd is, in my opinion, the only rational philosophy of the crafter. Any person's Fate is, of course, influenced by their upbringing, their ancestry, and the effects of their past choices and experiences. A person's Fate or Wyrd is simply the likely outcome based on

past and current behavior, combined with current situations and influences, all moving towards a probable outcome – probable, but not preordained.

The key is to know that infinite possibilities are within our reach. Sure, knowing the probability can be a useful thing, but being bound by it is not in keeping with the cunning ways. Where would we be as a species if we were bound by what was probable? At any given moment we can change our Wyrð with a thought or a word, just as the Wyrð of humanity has been spun on a dime by the dreams of forward-thinking individuals.

Since Fate is nothing more than the probable outcome of consequences, then yes – as cunning folk we can indeed turn the hand of Fate. As the nimble fingers of the Wyrð Sisters work the threads, the pattern that they weave is guided by our thoughts, words, and actions. It is free will that gives all humans the ability to change the future, and as cunning folk we have at our disposal all the more tools with which to manifest change and thereby “turn the hand of Fate.”

Not only can we turn the hand of Fate, but we should shed the binding fear of interfering with the way things are meant to be that seems to grip so many practitioners today. The ever-invasive dread that - by using our craft - we may be upsetting the greater good inhibits the craft in an insidious way that I find maddening. There seems to be this tendency to overcomplicate and overthink even the simplest of craftings. If you are ethical, honorable, and respectful in your ways, then you need never fear that the dark, looming hand of Fate will snatch you up for your crafting.

It's really very simple if you think about it; but, then again, I am a simple cunning woman and I have seen all too often the folly of making something more complicated than it has to be.

Besides, if something is truly fated or preordained to happen, then we cannot change it. By definition it is impossible for us to change that which is foreordained due to the inference of divine foreordination, is it not? If the Gods have truly preordained this person or that to die from an illness, then regardless of how cunning we are we cannot thwart that will. If everything that has happened or is happening or will happen is the product of some divine foreordination, then what reason have we to study the cunning arts - or even to live, for that matter? It makes no sense that cunning folk would

believe such a thing.

In the strictest terms, I do not believe that we can “cheat Fate.” Fate is not a being or entity. It is simply a way of expressing the idea that if we continue on a certain path then we will probably experience a certain outcome. Now, if for whatever reason the Gods my people swear by will a certain thing to happen – even someone’s death – then there is no way that I or any other crafter can thwart that will. Unlike those who are constantly shaking their fists at the Gods, I do not believe that I can thwart the will of the Gods. So even if one was to make the assertion that the will of the Gods is Fate, I submit that no human - no matter how great a crafter they might be - can thwart the will of the Gods

This leaves the question of whether we, as crafters, actually can or do turn the hand of Fate? Yes, of course we can and of course we do. We often call upon our abilities and our arts to change the course of things. If someone is sick, we work to make them well. This does not mean that we work against some invisible entity that has laid out the future for us. It simply means that we work to create the outcome that we need or desire.

Turning the hand of Fate is as simple as exercising free will. As crafters, it is common for us to use our arts to change the way things are going or to change the probable outcome of any given situation. If a person has cancer, then we might use our craft to try and heal that person, but we should do so without fear of reprisal for being successful in our workings.

I do not understand this fear of working for what you desire. Recently a woman I know asked that our community send energy to her ailing mother, who had been diagnosed with cancer after beating another type of cancer only recently. She asked not for healing energy, but just for comforting energy, in case the healing energy might actually work and thwart the way things are supposed to be. I say that if her mother is supposed to die, then die she will and no amount of our interference will change that; but if there is a chance to help her mother, then take that chance. It’s like some perverted Pagan form of Christian Science philosophy. Christian Scientists don’t get medical care because they feel that any illness or disease is God’s will. This has resulted in countless court cases against parents who have withheld vital and lifesaving medical services to their children, and rightly so. To withhold medical care from a child because the parents believe it

is God's will is reckless and arrogant. It implies knowledge of the will of God and it implies that anything that God can manifest, man can thwart. Now, I am in no way accusing this delightful woman of being reckless or arrogant; I simply believe she is the product of reckless and arrogant teachers.

In the myth of Arianrhod and Llew we find a perfect example of destiny and Fate. Llew, Arianrhod's son is "destined" to be the Sacred King by virtue of His divine birth and magickal upbringing, yet it is not written in stone. He must accomplish certain things before he can prove that he is worthy of claiming that birthright. If he does not do so, then he cannot be the Sacred King. If at anytime he decided not to do all that is required of him, or if he is unable to do the things that are required of him, he will not be Sacred King. Now, one could argue that once he takes on that role, he is Fated to die, and I would agree with that argument - to a point. I would argue that death is the consequence for accepting the mantle of the Sacred King. By accepting that mantle, or "role" if you will, he is basically signing a contract to die at the end of the cycle. Whether that death is to be taken literally or figuratively is a subject for a different time. The death of the Sacred King is simply the end result of becoming the Sacred King, cause and effect. ❖

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Elusive, my Trio

Christopher Michael

Elusive, my Trio,
The Three
Who grace my thoughts and dreams.
Hearkening back throughout time,
The Triune has existed in forms as varied
As those to whom She appeared;
Now to me, my personal Trinity,
Three Ladies wearing silken gowns of
Red and White and Black.
Far more than maiden, mother, and crone,
Are You three-in-one or one-in-three
Or both? (I think.)



Queen of the Mound,
In your scarlet dress
With snake and bird
and horse brocade,
You smile at me lovingly,
like a protective Sister.
Golden hair cascading
past a golden crown,
Of earth and underworld
You teach me.
All things of field, and flower,
and faery
are in
Your dominion.
You teach of suffering and
compassion, of loss and of love.

No less fair,
Great Queen of Heaven,
Wearing silks of moonlit white,
With skin as pale as the snowy stars
And hair as black as the ebon night
And rose-red lips -
Like the fairy tale Princess of legend -
Yet far greater is your Castle in the firmament.
With argent wheel you turn the cosmos
and my days.



Queen of Phantoms,
She of the Three that is Triune Herself.
Warrior. Lover. Whore. Lady.
Is your gown black as the raven, or
Red as the life-blood spilt on the field?
Of lust and death and passion,
Of courage and honor and strength -
These are your lessons.

Twisting and weaving, three strands of power,
Norns after another fashion,
Dancing together in an eternal braid,
Your cords bind my hands and my heart.
What mysteries do you whisper?
Are you Graces, or Gorgons, or Furies?
My Three Queens of Heaven, Earth, and Hell.

JANET FARRAR & GAVIN BONE: THE COMPLETE INTERVIEW

BY
TONY MIERZWICKI

Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone are prolific authors who have written many books on witchcraft. Janet is possibly best known for co-writing *The Witches' Bible: The Complete Witches' Handbook* with her now deceased husband, Stewart Farrar; while Gavin is remembered for co-writing a number of more recent texts with Janet.

Janet and Gavin left their home country of Ireland and toured Australia from January to February 2001 presenting well-received workshops and lectures. On 21 February 2001, Tony Mierzwicki had the privilege of interviewing Janet and Gavin. The interview was serialized into a number of portions with the intention of publishing them in a now defunct Australian magazine called *Psychic Interactive*. After the first two portions were published, the magazine folded. *The Crooked Path Journal* has decided that, because of its importance, the interview should be made available in its entirety.



In Part 1, Janet and Gavin discuss how they got started in witchcraft, what witchcraft means to them, and they give insights into their own spiritual practices and the remnants of pagan magick in their Irish homeland. In Part 2, Janet and Gavin will discuss Gerald Gardner (the founder of Gardnerian witchcraft), Doreen Valiente, Alex Sanders (the founder of Alexandrian witchcraft), initiation and vital information for young people seeking to join a coven for the first time. In Part 3, Janet and Gavin will discuss their vision of the future of witchcraft, provide essential book recommendations, and reveal their thoughts on Australia.

❖ Part One ❖

Janet: Australia is a very new continent. Witchcraft here is in its infancy. We are trying to develop the spiritual path of the witches of Australia by educating them in not only just the history of witchcraft, but also in practical workshops on how magick happens, how to use your natural energy, how to balance it, and how to take it forward to create what generally is termed “magick.” By the way, there is no such thing as magick. No, not at all. Same as there is no such thing as “supernatural.” Everything that we do is a perfectly natural development of human spirituality, and anybody with proper training can do it, absolutely anybody.

Tony: So how would you describe yourself and the spiritual path that you’re on?

Janet: Technically I’m known in the movement as a Wiccan. I don’t like that word; I prefer to use the old word for it, a good hearty word - “witch.” I’m a witch.

Tony: What about you, Gavin? How would you describe yourself?

Gavin: I classify myself as a witch as well, like Janet. I also classify myself as a priest probably before anything else, in that I have a connection to deity. My role in life is to bring deity into the lives of other people, to bring spirit to them. So I see that as part of my label, I suppose you could say, although I try to avoid labels. But the way I work is very much in what you would call Shamanistic ways, the old ways of Northern Europe, which I bring into my way of working. But I see these just as tools for the eventual goal, which I am trying to achieve.

Tony: OK, so you both describe yourself as witches. How would you define the term “witch”?

Janet: A witch is the remnants of an ancient priesthood that goes back pre-Middle Ages, certainly well over 2000 years ago. It’s the country wise man or country wise woman. It’s a craft, the same as in any village; you had the blacksmith, the tinker, the tailor, the candlestick maker, you had the village witch. And these were the people who directed the religious affairs of the village. And Gavin is quite right when he uses the term priest, it is a priesthood of pagans.

Tony: So Gavin, would you agree with that definition?

Gavin: Absolutely. I see Wicca principally as a priesthood and a priestess-hood. And we are trying to instill that back into the modern pagan movement, that this is what it should be about. Not just a priesthood for those in

the pagan movement, but for everybody as a whole. What we find where we live in Ireland is [that] we will have people turn up on our doorstep who are good Roman Catholics who want questions answered. And Janet will do tarot readings for them. They don't feel comfortable going to a Roman Catholic priest, so they come to us instead. And one of the things we've learned over the years is that when you look at all religions around the world, particularly the older ones – Hinduism, Shinto – there is very little difference between their practices and what we call "neo-paganism." There's just differences in culture, that's all. But again, the same goals are at work.

Tony: So what attracted you both to

behind almost every monotheistic culture of the world there are pagan roots. In a sense I went back to the pagan roots that were there before Christianity.

Tony: What about you, Gavin?

Gavin: I started off looking for a way of boxing my spirituality, boxing my beliefs. I'd gone to the Christian church and it didn't make any logical sense what they were saying. They were saying it's "this way." And I thought, "that doesn't make sense, there can't be just one way." So I started to look for what I believed in, examining what I believed in and I discovered that I believed - for instance - in reincarnation. I thought, "well, Buddhism believes in reincarnation, that makes sense."

"It's a craft, the same as in any village; you had the blacksmith, the tinker, the tailor, the candlestick maker, you had the village witch."

witchcraft? Can you tell us about some of your early experiences with witchcraft?

Janet: What attracted me to it was the opposite of what you might think. I was a Sunday school teacher, and I was a good Christian, and I went to save somebody, to get them away from what I thought was a terrible Satan-worship cult. Instead, I found one of the most practical philosophies that I had ever come across in my life. Rather than going against the religion I had grown up with, it amplified it. I discovered that for the early years of being a witch I was very able to harmonize the Christianity that I'd grown up with, strip away the myths and legends from it, get back to its grassroots foundation, and then progress forward. And I realized that

Then I started to look at the idea of polarity: male-female, black-white, good-evil; and I came across the ideas in Taoism so for a while, that made sense as well, "that's Taoist." I got to Hinduism, a multi-god, polytheistic system, and I realized that those deities, those faces of the divine, represented images in culture, images in society and images in nature. I thought, "that makes sense as well." So for a while I used this sort of conglomeration of what I thought was instant culture, and then I picked up a book on Wicca by woman called Doreen Valiente and realised that everything was in there but it was from a western cultural viewpoint. And that was a realization, a discovery. I was a witch. One other fact which played a big part was, at the time, I was trying to avoid the fact that I was a healer. And I

had always been drawn towards the psychic, towards the spiritual. The best label I found that I could describe myself in this society was a witch, a Wiccan, which I continue to use to this day.

Janet: Witchcraft is very much a religion based on healing. It is the foremost and most important work that any witch does.

Gavin: If you look at the origins of magick, it starts with the shaman in the cave, going right back to the stone age, trying to drive out the evil spirit which is possessing somebody who is ill. So the first forms of magick were to do with healing. So for us it's a healing tradition. And that's something else we're trying to do at the moment, re-instill this original direction within Wicca.

Tony: So have your lives been enhanced by your practice of Wicca?

Janet: I've been practicing the Craft, as it is known, since 1970, and the rewards that I have had from practicing this old philosophy have amplified my life a thousand-fold. I wouldn't want it any different.

Gavin: I can't divorce my life from my spirituality; it's something they do in monotheistic religions. Going to a church on Sundays, and that's it, that's your spirituality. I can't do that. It is my life. My whole life is enhanced by it. To me it's very difficult to answer the question, because the two are so intertwined for me, they're indivisible.



*Janet Farrar and
Gavin Bone*

Tony: What sort of spiritual practices do you practice on a regular basis? What sort of rituals do you perform?

Janet: There are personal private rituals and then there are the ones that involve all the members of our group. The private ritual always starts for me the moment I get up in the morning. The first thing I do is I take care of the needs of my deity, and my deity likes to be surrounded by fresh flowers, the scent of perfumes, incenses, oils. So every morning I make libations and offerings to that deity and right throughout the day I'm performing small rituals in one form or another to deity and that can be as simple as - something that the human race has lost quite sadly as we've moved into the 21st century - kindness, politeness and manners. They're all part of a ritual, and it's something that's sadly lacking in modern culture. As far as the other aspects of ritual go, when our group gets together we celebrate eight festivals, celebrations of the cycles of the northern hemisphere seasons of planting to

harvest. We also celebrate personal rituals. For example, we have rituals for children, the equivalent of a Christian christening, we have marriage rites, and we have funeral rites, and these are all part of our lives.

Tony: You mentioned your personal deity before, who is She or He?

Janet: We see the creative principle of the universe as male and female, the Lord and the Lady. The female aspect to me has a Norse name which actually just means “the Lady,” and that’s Freya. Interestingly enough, She’s a cat goddess, and once you put your life in the hands of the deity, and you say to that deity, “I am your servant, your priestess,” She makes sure that you actually do what She wants. In our case every damn stray cat for miles seems to get dumped on my doorstep. I’m not joking! And the other aspect, the male aspect, is Her counterpart, Frey, and His name just means “the Lord.” He’s a harvest deity, a corn deity. Of course, I live in the heart of the Irish countryside, so I need a harvest deity to fulfill my needs, because local farmers will come to me and ask when to plant. And if I don’t come up with the goods, then I’m in real trouble!

Tony: What about you, Gavin? Are there any particular deities that you feel very close to?

Gavin: I work with Frey and Freya as well. Freya is my principal deity, has been for over 10 years now. And that was what I call my real initiation, was actually becoming a priest of Her. The initiation didn’t take place in a magick circle; it took place in the space of a year in my life, which turned my life upside down, because I made a dedication to Her, as Her priest. I can see from that point onwards

how my life has changed, actually very much for the better. But I work with other deities as well, as is necessary.

Janet: We all do that; we both do that. I think to explain to people who don’t understand, because it’s very confusing when they hear people mention the word “deities,” rather than “deity.” As I said, we see the Creator as male and female. But all these deities of the world, from every culture of the world, are faces that we put on the Divine. For a Hindu, it could be the Durga, who is their mother goddess figure. To the ancient Egyptians, you might find them worshipping a deity called Anubis, who had the head of a jackal. We personify a deity by giving it identity and faces, so they’re just aspects of the Divine, the ultimate Divine.

Gavin: We work with a lot of deities as we feel we need to. I will work with Norse deities, Woden, Donar, the god Thor. We will also work with Hindu deities, particularly, one called Ganesha. Because He’s in fact the most worshipped deity in the world, you’ll find Him in almost every continent, you’ll find a shrine to Ganesha somewhere. If you go to Bombay, there’s a shrine of Him in every taxi, because He’s the remover of obstacles. He’s the elephant headed god, and of course, for the Indians, the elephant was used for removing obstacles from the road. This is the symbolism of the deity, the elephant. We will use him, because He’s worshipped so much around the world. He’s a very powerful god, so when we invoke Him, things happen.

A good example from a few years back: around the world there were reports coming in during the festival of Diwali, that Ganesha had actually been drinking milk from bottles.

And we thought that was interesting, that makes a change from the bleeding Madonnas that you get in the Catholic church. So we decided that we would try actually feeding milk to a little Ganesha statue in our house. And, lo and behold, the milk disappeared! It actually happened.

Janet: And not because that cats got it! [laughter] It's far too high up for the cats to reach!

Gavin: One thing you should realize is that the deity forms you come across, 50% of their make-up is what we give them, the other 50% comes from the divine. So it's not a groveling relationship which you get in some patriarchal religions, it's a working relationship of "I'll

about. We don't have a problem with Voudon, we understand where it comes from. But for some people it is very difficult to understand that if you give yourself over to a Voudon deity it takes your life over very completely and is very jealous. It's what has been fitted to that culture.

Tony: Jealous in what respect? With respect to other gods?

Gavin: Yes. Basically, you worship them and that's it. You can't have anybody else. So we say to people, particularly westerners, avoid them. But we will quite happily walk into a Hindu temple, and worship in a Hindu temple. And if you do that, particularly if there's an Indian community, you'll be surprised at

"...throughout the day I'm performing small rituals in one form or another to deity and that can be as simple as... kindness, politeness, and manners. "

do this for you, if you do this for me," it's a partnership. So for us in our lives with our personal deities, that's very much a partnership in our lives. We can't divorce ourselves from day-to-day deity in our everyday lives. And when you do that we find that we work a myth of those deities in our everyday lives. Once you start to understand deity you find you can work with more of them. Though, some we won't work with because we just don't get on with them.

A good example is the west African, the Orishas, who rather than what you'd call "deity" are a higher spirit form which we try to avoid working with because we don't have the mindset, the cultural mindset, to work with them, which is something we warn people

how welcome you are, because to them, their religion is open to everybody.

Tony: Tell us about spiritual practices in Ireland, your home country.

Gavin: Well, Ireland's rather interesting, because during the height of the witch trials, less than 10 people were actually prosecuted for witchcraft...

Janet: Or executed...

Gavin: Or executed, for that matter.

Tony: Does that mean that not many people were practicing witchcraft in Ireland?

Gavin: No, it's because the magickal traditions had been traditionally part of the Druidic past. Now Druidism in Ireland was part of a caste system, very similar to the feudal system, which came later, where you had an upper class who were the educated intelligencia, and this is what the Druids were. So you couldn't be a king unless you were a Druid, you couldn't be nobility unless you were from a Druid family, and again it was in the family. So when Christianity came along in Ireland, what it did, is it did what it does everywhere - it pinpointed and targeted the people who were nobility and Christianized them first. Well at that time Christianity merged very happily in with paganism, so Druids quite happily became monks or priests, while continuing to practice the old pagan ways. It's one of the reasons the Ogham script developed in Ireland. The Ogham script is a fusion of a Latin vowel system with the old Druidic tree lore. It was a way of passing it down through Christianity. So as time went on, of course, Christianity got a stronger foothold.

The old deities were hidden behind the saints in Ireland, very similar to the African Santeria practices. So for instance, St Brigit was actually a Christianization of the goddess Brigid. St Patrick took on many of the aspects of the god Lugh. So this carried on in Irish tradition and many of the aspects of magick took on Christian forms rather than neo-pagan forms. These are some of the things we've come across in Ireland. For instance, you have holy wells all over Ireland. Their use dates back well before the coming of Christianity, in fact even before the coming of the Celtic peoples into Ireland. But there were magickal traditions associated with them: leaving stuff at the wells, hanging stuff

from the trees next to the well. And these are all pagan traditions which are carried on, but they carried on in the form of it being Irish Roman Catholicism. One of the most interesting finds we've come across is in an envelope in a tree. When we carefully opened it, there was a prayer to St Martha and it was a threat. It said basically "Blessed St Martha please give me this, this, this in my life. If not I won't light candles to you in the Lady Chapel and I'll turn the statue of the Madonna upside down in the church." And this is an actual old form of spell work, which you come across in old forms of paganism. It's that working with deity "I'll give you this, this and this if you do this for me, if not, well, basically I'll ignore you."

Janet: One of the loveliest ones I ever saw was really cheeky. It read, "Holy Mary conceived without sin, help me to sin without conceiving."



❖ Part Two ❖

Gavin: We have been asked on occasion to do some rather interesting things in Ireland because that magick is still there. We were asked to come down to a village. In this village there was one church and two pubs. In Ireland there's a general rule: there should be basically a pub per church in a village of that size. The two pubs were fighting it out. They were cursing each other, and we were asked by one pub to go down there and actually lift a curse. And somebody in the village was doing a curse called "burying the sheaf." And it was a memory of the old corn king ritual, where at the end of the Lammas season, the end of Lughnasadh - August - you took corn, made it into a corn dolly and you buried it in the soil as a sacrifice for the coming year. But what was being done was this corn dolly was being made, it was being named as a person in the village, and then was being buried in the field with the Catholic Last Rites. It was actually a form of cursing. And we were, at one stage, going to actually lift the curse on that pub because it had been made against the publican. So you still have these little things go on in Ireland.

So although the spirituality there is - on the face of it - Christian Roman Catholicism, when you start to go out into the countryside you find the remnants of paganism still there. The problem is that a lot of neo-pagans, modern pagans, go over and expect to see blatant paganism. They see the ancient sites, they see the stone circles, they see the burial mounds, places like New Grange, and they see places which appear to be Catholic worship. But they don't actually see what's behind it, what's actually really going on. And that's one of the things that we found from living there that the paganism there is still alive, the magick is still alive in the Christian culture there.

Tony: There are dozens and dozens of books on Wicca and witchcraft out there. How authentic are these books, and what traditions are they based on?

Janet: Some of them are very good and some of them are absolute garbage. When you mention traditions, "tradition" is a very modern thing. Witchcraft does not go back as a modern philosophy before basically 1950, not really. There were one or two people who called themselves "witches." People who claim to have ancient family traditions are telling you whoppers.

A classic way of explaining that is where we live in Ireland, what is an Irish witch? A Druid. It's as simple as that. The same will apply to Scotland. Modern witchcraft does not have its roots in anything, as I said, that is very ancient. The village wise woman or wise man, these people I was talking about earlier, they would not have called themselves witches. They would have considered themselves the priesthood of pagan villages. "Witch" was applied to them during the persecution times because the Church needed to point the finger at something, and they chose the word "witch."

It's interesting this passage in the Bible that says "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," the original translation was "poisoner." "Thou shalt not suffer a poisoner to live." But when James I had the Bible translated, he was convinced that there was black magick behind every cupboard door, and so he took that old Anglo-Saxon word of the Wicca or *wicce* and slapped it into everything, including his own translation. So, there would not have been

witches as we know them back in the Middle Ages. There would have just been the village wise men and women, and because they were the healers, they were the doctors, the midwives and the herbalists, the councilors, the weather predictors, etc. So there are no books that really talk about family tradition that are telling the truth. They are all traditions that are basically based around about the 1950's onwards.

Tony: How important is lineage to the practice of Wicca?

Gavin: It's not really that important at all. This is something that has been brought in by what's referred to as "Gardnerian Wicca." The idea of lineage came into Wicca, into modern witchcraft, through Gerald Gardner;

makes no sense; it only exists in a family setting.

Janet: And anything that came out of a family setting would've been passed on by word of mouth and would not have been written down. These people were illiterate, they were simple country people. They could not read or write. And let's face it, up until the beginning of the 20th century, a lot of country people - most country people - could not read or write. So any concept of a book saying this is how we wrote it down for generations, you can see that's a little crazy.

Tony: Gerald Gardner is commonly referred to as "the father of modern witchcraft." How authentic was the witchcraft that he introduced in the 1950's?

"In some countries...the village witch is often the same woman you see going to Mass on Sundays."

and it's believed he brought that in because he was involved in co-masonry, where they use a system of lineage. The system he used is identical to the actual ordination of an Anglican priest in the Church of England, what is referred to as "apostolic succession." The idea of passing power from one person to another doesn't really exist in paganism. In the family traditions which would've existed with pagan priesthoods where it was a craft - yes - it would've been passed down from mother to daughter, father to son; but in the same way that the tradition of a blacksmith, the culture of the blacksmith, was passed down to his son. So if you look at it from that perspective and the fact that now we actually pass on our knowledge down to somebody else in Wicca who we're not related to, the idea of lineage

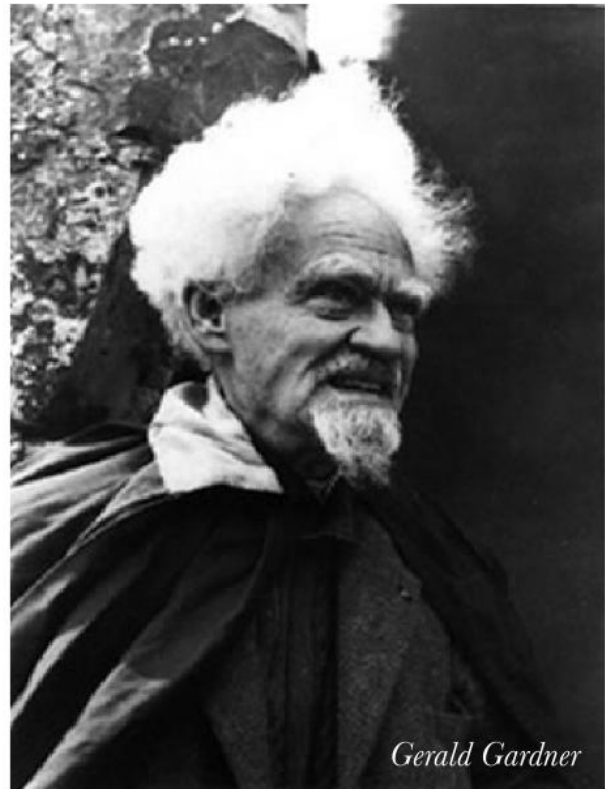
Janet: I don't think it was. I think he made it up - and I'll tell you why. At that period he'd been through, a man of his age, the First World War, the Second World War - thousands and thousands of people in Europe died as a result of those two wars. With the 1920's, which stood between the two wars, the flapper generation came and people became very interested in anything to do with spirituality, especially Roman spirituality, Greek spirituality.

Gavin: You had a social revolution in the 1920's and 1930's. People decided "that's it, we're gonna strip away the old morals and values of the Edwardian and Victorian eras." So for its time, the 1920's very much was very similar to the late 60's several decades on. It was almost a foretaste of what was to come,

because people started looking around at the occult in the 1920's and 30's. And many of the modern occult groups really extend their roots to then. The Theosophy movement really began to grow at that point.

Janet: We think that's what Gerald Gardner discovered, that he discovered a group of Theosophists and he said that they were witches, and they said, "oh no we're not." And he said, "oh yes you are." And they said, "no we're not." But he was so convinced that he'd found a coven of witches, he decided to create a myth, and that was the myth of this particular coven. The woman who was actually supposed to have run the coven did exist [Dorothy Clutterbuck], but we believe that she was a Theosophist because by the time she died, she had married a man called Rupert Fordham. Rupert Fordham had high links with the Salvation Army in Britain. I cannot see a high-ranking Salvation Army officer marrying a witch; it does not make sense. And secondly, on the day he died, he died in a car crash. Dorothy was in the car with him, they were on their way to church, and she was very heavily involved in the women's guild of the local church. Again it does not make sense as a witch, not during that period.

When I say "that period," I think I better slightly elaborate. In some countries, especially Catholic countries, the village witch is often the same woman you see going to Mass on Sundays. Yes, she would see herself as a Christian, but she would hide the ancient gods behind Christian saints, you don't find that in a Protestant country. And Dorothy Clutterbuck lived in the New Forest in England, a Protestant country. I think



Gerald Gardner

in the end, these Theosophists told Gerald Gardner to go away and leave them alone in no uncertain terms. But he wanted it to be so real, he created the mythos of a coven. And from then, he started to gather people around him, and he built up the very first coven, and I'm completely convinced of that. And so, he was in a sense the father of modern witchcraft.

More importantly though, what he had written down at the time was very, very limited. In fact, the early writings he did were very Christian-oriented, rather than pagan. He met a woman called Doreen Valiente. Doreen Valiente, a brilliant woman who spoke at least seven languages, was the mother of modern witchcraft. She took his scribbled notes and put them into some sort of cohesive order and added stuff of her own, and she created technically what is today referred to as the

“Book of Shadows.” It was her work, rather than Gerald’s work.

Gavin: What Gerald Gardner did was no different to what any other pagan tradition had done before the coming of Christianity, which was to take from many different sources to create a tradition. If you went to Rome during the period before Christianity, this is what you found in Rome. You found temples to deities from all over the world, and you found people creating rituals for those deities, and then these would be passed down. Gardner did the same thing: he took from several different sources. He took information from Aleister Crowley, he took stuff that Doreen Valiente had written, he wrote stuff himself, he took stuff from Robert Graves, who wrote the book *The White Goddess*, and he created something that was coherent and worked. And that’s a pagan tradition, taking all these different elements and making it work as a form of spirituality. So he did nothing really which was new, so at least he got to that point, that - yes - what he was doing was an old way of working magick and old way of spirituality. What was unfortunate was that it became doctrinal, it became dogmatic. We do not believe he actually wanted it to be that way.

Tony: How does Alex Sanders fit into all this?

Janet: Alex Sanders came along in the 60’s. Gerald Gardner, by the way, died in ’64. He initiated so many different priestesses; one of them, a woman called Patricia Crowther, had met this Mr. Sanders and she took an instant dislike to him. But she had a priestess that left her coven, who obviously got on well with Alex, and contacted Gardner and

said, “I’ve met this man, Alex Sanders, and I would like to get him initiated.” And Gerald Gardner wrote back and said, “yes, feel free, you know, there’s no problem with this.” So Alex Sanders was initiated into the Craft, but he himself was a renegade and he created a mythos about his introduction to witchcraft. And his mythos was that his grandmother had initiated him when he was 13 years old; and according to him, she did it by nicking his scrotum with a knife. I’m sorry, that’s child abuse. And anyone who perpetuates a myth like that deserves to be thoroughly shaken.

His wife, Maxine, after his death said [that] of course it was all a legend and a lie. Well, we knew that in any case. We knew that he was basically initiated by a renegade Gardnerian priestess. He was a lovely man, because I was initiated by him, but he was also the joker in the pack. He set himself up to be “King of the Witches.” There are no kings and no queens of the witches, or at least there shouldn’t be. But he took that title upon himself, and of course the press believed it. They fell for it hook, line and sinker. And so did many other people; they believed the myth that he was the King of the Witches, of all the witches across the world. And the witchcraft movement across the world is enormous, by the way. It’s the second fastest growing religion worldwide. And I would say a good 90% of those witches, if they hear that statement that Alex Sanders was “King of the Witches,” they would with one voice say, “he’s not our king, and he never was.”

Tony: So what’s normally involved in initiation?

Gavin: There are different forms of

initiation. There's initiation into a group. Traditionally within Wicca, the person is brought in after a period of time, after getting to know the members of the group, and they may be brought in actually initially tied and blindfolded, and then brought into the group, go through some sort of trial or ordeal and they're taken over to the group possibly just to keep the secrecy of the members of it. We use a different way of doing things. For instance, we will dedicate something first of all and that's really a "path dedication" they have to take on their path to be a pagan, to be a witch. Then after a period of time, once it's obvious they've started to learn and they're committed, then we'll actually do an initiation into a degree.

What we're also looking for is the spiritual initiation. This is an initiation which takes place in everyday life. We don't believe initiation comes from me, from Janet, or from anybody else. It comes from the God and Goddess, from deity, from spirit. So we expect people to see a change in them once they start to work magickally, once they start to work with Wicca and the different techniques. Once they start to connect with deity, there'll be a change in their life. What we do is we then show them a ritual, an initiation ritual, around them, so that when they're taken into the ritual it makes them realize there has been a change.

Tony: Just further to that, what sort of advice would you have for people who choose to be solitary practitioners, and not ally themselves with any particular group?

Gavin: First of all, we have absolutely no problem with working solitary; you don't have to be in a group to be a witch, to be a Wiccan.

What it does take is a lot more discipline in what you're doing, you have to read more, you have to get more knowledge, and you have to actually do more experiential stuff, do more ritual for yourself, do more magickal techniques for yourself. It can be a much harder path, but it can be much more fruitful than being part of a group.

Tony: Are there any things that young people should be wary of if they choose to become part of an organized group?

Gavin & Janet: Oh yes. [laughter]

Janet: First thing I always say, is "do your parents know you're doing this?" It's no good believing that you can be 12 years old and be a witch. My attitude is, "sweetheart, I was a witch in 1970, I am 51 years old now, go out and get yourself a life, first of all. Learn to grow up, put yourself through university, because you're going to need every piece of knowledge you have in your entire life to become a witch." And if you go looking for a group, if they take you in under the age of consent, legal consent, steer clear of them. And if they try to pervert you with any sexual practices, or introduce you to the drug culture, or anything like that, or make you do anything you're unhappy with, you just get up and get out, it's as simple as that.

Kids are very vulnerable, they want magick and therefore when they go looking for these groups, this is what they think they're going to find, and they think it's going to be easy; and I know of young women who are quite willing to literally go to bed with the man who calls himself the high priest of the coven so that they can get the knowledge they're after, not

realizing that this man is no coven leader, and these people aren't genuine witches in the first place. I've seen it too many times. These are the con-men out there. These are the actual antithesis of everything that a witch should be.

Tony: Is there anything that you'd like to add to that Gavin?

Gavin: The first thing that should happen is meeting the people who are running the group. If they've given themselves grandiose titles, apart from high priest or high priestess, run away straight away, because it's not about ego. The other thing is they should be sitting there listening to you, what you're looking for. And they should be giving constructive criticism back. If they say, "right, that's it, you're in next week," then again, walk away, because it doesn't work that way.

Janet: If they ask for money, walk away. If they promise you eternal life and immortality and eternal beauty, walk away. It doesn't work that way.

Gavin: Wicca is a growth process, a spiritual way of growth, of enlightenment at the end of the day, just like any other true spirituality is. So they should looking out for what is best for you, not for what is best for themselves. Being priest and priestess they are also responsible for a group of people, who have a group mind. They're like a tight knit family, so they don't want to bring anyone in who is going to disrupt it in anyway. So the chances are you will also at some point, if they like you, be introduced to other members of that group, other members of that coven.

things that you should look for in a group that you wanted to join?

Gavin: Yes there is, and it's published by a very knowledgeable man called Isaac Bonewits. He's produced an occult danger evaluation frame. And with that, he goes through all the dangers. And really any group you join should not attempt to manipulate you in any way sexually, it should not attempt to have any control over your outside life...

Janet: Or break up your family, or take you away from your family.

Gavin: It should not attempt to divide you from your family. Basically, it should not be a cult. It should be anything but that. It should be, if anything, helping you to get on with your family, rather than pulling you away from it. It should not be taking money off you, except possibly some groups have small donations towards things like candles and incense. It should not (particularly the priest and priestess of the group) claim to be infallible. If the priest and priestess of the group can't turn around and say, "well, we're still learning," then they're not worth going there. Because nobody stops learning. What else? We're just about there with that list. That's the list to go through. You go through that whole list with them, and if you don't feel comfortable with those people, you walk away. And it might be hard to walk away because you may find that you might not find another group for another year. But it's better than going through a process of being hurt by that group.

❖ Part Three ❖

Tony: So is there something like a checklist of

Tony: What do you see as being the future of

Wicca and witchcraft in 21st century?

Janet: I think it will develop a mind and a power of its own. I would like to see every country in the world where witchcraft is practiced develop its own system of practicing that religion, of linking it to the land that they live on. It comes out of the northern culture of the northern hemisphere originally. I think that, for example, in the southern hemisphere for those people here who are practicing it, they should relate it to the southern hemisphere, to the seasons of the southern hemisphere. It should become very in tune with the culture, the native culture of the land that it lives in, and it should involve itself with the rest of humanity.

For certainly the first 20 years of its life it was a very insular way of practicing this religion because it was done in tiny covens, and the covens often did not meet with other covens. Certainly since 1990 - and I toured the United States a lot along with Gavin, and my deceased husband, Stewart - the community was so vast that it had organized itself into legal churches, which by the way we now have in Europe, or certainly in Ireland. There was a medical organization sprung from it. I'd like to see hospitals built one day by the witches. They were involved in social issues. Ordinary things I mean - like in this country I met quite a few witches who actually were fighting bushfires, they were firemen, for example. They should be involved with society and take this philosophy out into society, show society what it really is. Strip away the superstition, the ignorance, and the fear. And once you do that, it makes life a lot more pleasant for everybody.

It's always going to have problems because of the word "witchcraft." There are going to always be fundamentalists out there who still want to believe that we worship the devil. But then they may believe that the guy down the road who is a Catholic worships the devil as well. You can't change the whole world overnight, but if you show the world what you really are, sooner or later somebody says "oh yes" and begins to see differently and understand.

Tony: What are your thoughts on the future, Gavin?

Gavin: What we're seeing happen is a change generally in all spiritual life in that we're getting back to one of the things Christ was actually trying to explain in the first place before it got hijacked by St Paul and the Church, and that was that you can connect to deity directly. And, what we see happening is [that] more and more people, more and more groups, are going back to this way, smaller family type groups. Quakers are doing it, the Unitarian church is doing it, on the Christian side of things. And what we're seeing is smaller groups of people worshipping rather than in the big churches, and we think what's going to happen is Wicca is going to be at the forefront of this. So it's going to expand and diversify.

Wicca isn't a stagnant religion, it's continually evolving, just as nature evolves around us. Because Wicca has a nature-based philosophy, it must do that. So, it's going to mean that there are going to be spiritual and religious practices related to the culture of the people who worship them. So we will see, in Australia, Wicca and paganism will be

very different here to what it is in England or America. It has to be. Seasons are different, the position of the sun in the sky is different. And as most Wiccan practice relates around those eight seasonal festivals and the moon phases, and actually where the elements are in the environment, it's got to be different here. And we know this is a big debate going on in Australia at the moment.

One thing we've debated with somebody recently is whether the eight main festivals are relevant here. Certainly the solstices and the equinoxes are, but we're not so sure the other 4 are relevant here, because it is so different. It's pointless trying to have Samhain here on October 31st because it is so very different. It represents something that time of year here in nature, [but] it's very different to that time of year in Britain. So, we're seeing that aspect being brought in, and what we think we're seeing is something else paganism's already affected and that's the Christian church.

At the moment there's one particular priest, Matthew Fox, and he's talking about earth-based spirituality in a Christian context, and that's because he's had connections with Wiccans in the United States. So we're going to see that as well. Wicca is growing very, very fast and the amount of people involved in it will probably double in the next 5 years. The media is full of the images of the benign witch in TV programs specifically aimed at children as well.

Janet: It's certainly become socially acceptable in one part of America. A friend of ours started an organization. He called it the Aquarian Tabernacle Church and it's basically a church for the solemnization of

marriage rites, etc. But it's made up of covens right the way across the United States and we found there was a branch of it right here in Australia. Pete Pathfinder founded it. His proudest moment was when the World Council of Churches invited him to lead the service in the cathedral in Seattle, and he has the photograph of himself in his ritual robes as a witch priest leading the service and on one side of him being a counterbalance is the Dalai Lama and on the other side of him as the equal counterbalance is the Catholic cardinal. A lovely ecumenical getting together of people of different religions in a Catholic cathedral, and it was a wonderful experience. So it is becoming acceptable even in the eyes of a lot of people inside the Christian community.

Some years ago where we live in Ireland we wondered how the local village priest would react. We'd only just moved to the town that we live in, and it's a town with a very strong Christian heritage. It's a place called Kells in County Meath, where the famous *Book of Kells* comes from, which is an illuminated gospel dating back, I can't remember exactly when it was printed, but I think it was 600-and-something and it's one of the wonders of the world, one of the Irish treasures. And we thought, "with that kind of heritage, is the church going to frown on witchcraft?" Instead, just before the Christmas festival there was a knock on the front door and it was the local Catholic priest. He smiled from ear to ear and he said, "I don't know what you witches do this time of year, but do have a lovely one." So we wished him the same.

Tony: How important do you think the internet is to Wicca in the 21st century?

Janet: Oh, ask Gavin that one. He's the internet buff!

Gavin: The internet has changed everything. Suddenly people could communicate one-on-one without looking at each other. So it meant people could start by being secretive, they could use pseudonyms. Websites could go up and nobody could see where the website had come from. So suddenly people had this big new method of communication, where people could go up and say, "this is what we're doing in paganism, this is what we're doing in witchcraft." And it's interesting that for every one Christian site on the internet, there is one pagan [site], which tells you a lot about the modern pagan movement, that it's not scared to grasp a new technology, whereas Christianity has been a bit reticent. Paganism has gone, "right, this is for us, we're going to do it." So the biggest websites up are pagan, if you look around the

source documents they're putting them up. It's becoming impossible for people to actually fudge what has happened in the past in Wicca or even blatantly lie about it. A good example of this was a gentleman who came across documents proving the connection between Aleister Crowley and Gerald Gardner. And what did he do? Scanned them, put them up on a website, so everybody could see. So this is what it's doing, its changing things

considerably and it's caused a snowball. Because everyone with a computer, anybody with an internet connection, can go up and get information on Wicca. You don't even need to buy a book, there's so much out there.

Tony: So, what was the connection between Aleister Crowley and Gerald Gardner?

Gavin: Gerald's first Book of Shadows was a mishmash of bits of folk tradition and some

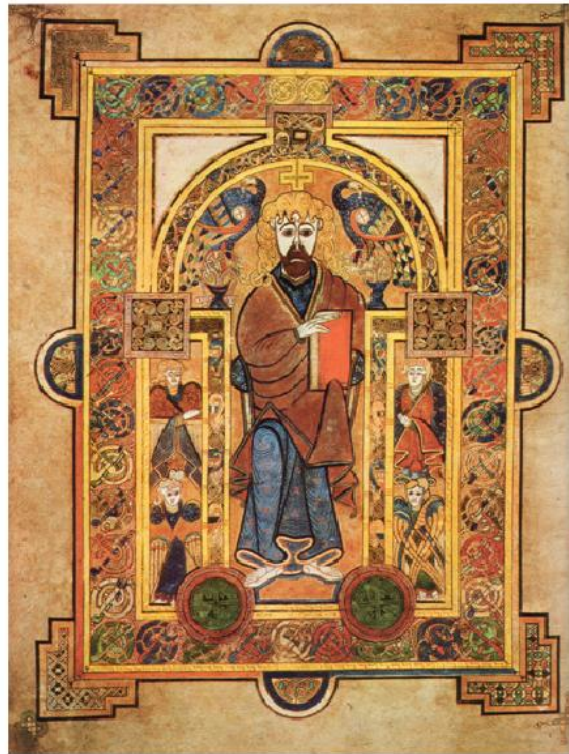


Illustration from The Book of Kells

world amongst all the religious sites. So it's become incredibly important, an important vehicle for the modern pagan movement. You're getting cyber-covens formed, you're getting groups of people meeting up, discussing witchcraft, discussing paganism. It's also broken down the secrecy that existed within Wicca, because people are publishing material up there. If somebody comes across interesting

stuff he wrote himself. Well, he just felt that wasn't enough and he wanted acceptance of this new religion he was forming. He wanted the acceptance of Wicca. He'd been introduced to Aleister Crowley. He approached Aleister Crowley about OTO membership, and he was made a member of the OTO. There isn't any doubt about this because the first copies of *High Magic's Aid* actually have all the details

in the front.

Janet: *High Magic's Aid* was a book that Gardner wrote, a novel, on witchcraft.

Gavin: It says, "author Gerald Gardner, pen name Stryer OTO, grade Philosophus." There's no doubt he was a member of the OTO. The story goes that he purchased a charter from Aleister Crowley for 200 pounds, and this is certainly confirmed by the material we find on the internet. What Crowley did was he gave him a charter equating Wicca with the OTO, because Gardner wanted it to be recognised by proper magickal institutions that were around. So what Gerald and Crowley did between them was equate the first three degrees of Gardnerian Wicca with the degrees of the OTO. So the first degree in Wicca is the first, second, and third degree in the OTO. The second degree in Wicca is the fourth, fifth and sixth. And the third degree is the seventh, eighth and ninth. And this is what was done, and that's really the link. And also Gardner, in his second Book of Shadows, "the book of the art magickal" [*Ye Bok of ye Art Magical*], introduced a lot of Crowley material as well which Doreen Valiente recognized, when he read it out in ritual one night. And it was Doreen Valiente who was actually responsible for removing a lot of the Crowley material because she didn't approve of Crowley much. Gerald wanted the new religion to be validated by others in the occult scene - that was really important to him, that was the real clinch.

Tony: How do think people should go about getting started practicing witchcraft? Are there any books that you'd recommend? How does a young person get started these days?

Gavin: When it comes to books, it's a case of separating wheat from chaff. You're looking for books which are very well written, which are obviously very academic. You're looking for the content, ones which are giving over a lot of information, what it's really all about. We recommend staying away from books that are preaching specific traditions. Get one specific book which goes into the festival cycles. Get one specific book which goes heavily into the nature of deity forms of gods and goddesses. And don't just get the books which are purely written by pagans or witches for witches. Go to academic books. Pick up a copy of Grave's *The White Goddess* for instance. And be critical of them. You'll come across two books and they may not agree with each other, and be aware of that. The books you'll find published are people's points of view, and they may only be just one point of view.

Janet: Scott Cunningham wrote very good books. I'd recommend his books to any young person. Anything by Doreen Valiente, especially her *ABC of Witchcraft*. We wrote one called *The Pagan Path* some time ago which was an introduction as to what paganism actually is; in fact we've done a whole lot of books, but that's neither here nor there. Those are the kind of paths that Gavin is specifically thinking of as far as witchcraft goes. Ray Buckland started a tradition himself, and he called it "Seax Wicca," after the word "Saxon." And his book *The Tree* is excellent reading, and what's the other one?

Gavin: He did *The Complete Book of Witchcraft*.

Janet: That's a very good one.

Tony: When you say he started "Saxon

Witchcraft,” what exactly do you mean?

Gavin: He created it...

Janet: He created it himself...

Gavin: He decided “That’s it, there needs to be another tradition,” and he was very honest right from the start that “I’m creating this.” He researched Anglo-Saxon traditions, one particular book, Scots of England. And what he did was he created a ritual system in one book. And it’s a good primer; it’s a good framework for ritual. And it covers all the major festivals, covers the coven structure, and it works very well. So that’s a good book to go for as well. And he was honest about its origins. It’s worth looking at the writers who’ve been around for a while. The problem [that] we found with books is now there’s a lot of books on witchcraft, and they’re referring continually back to writers who’ve been before them in witchcraft, less than five years before instead of people who are researching back academic sources and stuff going back twenty or thirty years. There’s nobody first-sourcing material in books like they used to, which is a

shame. So you do really have to wade through the books to find the gems.

Tony: So do you think it’s important to build up an extensive library of various occult books in order to practice witchcraft?

Gavin: It’s not just the craft books, any books on spirituality.

Janet: Not even just books on spirituality. I think it is very good that anyone who wants to study witchcraft starts by getting the books on spirituality; studying astronomy, not astrology, astronomy; basic medicine, because both are going to be necessary and needed as part of your witch training; anything on other cultures of the world; other religions of the world; history; society; psychology; archaeology; oh yes, and mythology, of course.

Gavin: Not just the usual run-of-the-mill-this-is-a-book-on-witchcraft. You need to study a lot, because you need to understand what religion is. And the best way to do that is to pick up books that examine religion objectively.



Tony: I guess what I was hoping for was one definitive book on witchcraft that I could steer our viewers to.

Gavin: Ummm, ours! [laughter]

l to r: Tony Mierzwicki, Gavin Bone, Jo-Ann Byers-Mierzwicki, Janet Farrar

Janet: There's no such thing!

Gavin: In that case get *The Witches Bible* by Janet and Stewart Farrar, Phoenix Publications, at any good bookstore.

Janet: When did you become my PR man?

Gavin: Ten years ago, I believe.

Tony: So, what are some of the highlights from your trip to Australia?

Gavin: Koalas...

Janet: Koalas, and more koalas, I want koala bears!

Gavin: I really think the PSG [Pagan Summer Gathering] festival.

Janet: Simply because it was a chance to meet so many witches and pagans in this country en masse for the first time. Everywhere we've been has had little highlights, and everywhere we've stayed, the people have been absolutely wonderful. But to have them all in one place was a really good experience. But there were no koalas!

Gavin: You get to see people for what they are at the festival, waking up in the morning with hangovers, crawling out of tents, and people also got to see us as we really were and not for the image they get out of a book, which has been one of the problems we find. If people define you as being famous, or infamous in our case, they get an image in their mind of what you're all about and they expect...? What we like to do when they meet is break that image as soon as possible, so they get to know who we really are. So that was the great thing about

the PSG, lots of people came up and said, "oh, you're not like I thought you would be, you're very different." And that seemed to be the norm at the festival, which we were very pleased about.

Tony: I suppose we should explain to our readers that the PSG is the Pagan Summer Gathering, and it's put on by the Church of All Worlds, and it's held once a year for about 4 days in late January. So do you think you'll be back to Australia?

Janet: Oh yes, within 2 years, we're definitely coming back. We want to do some very intensive workshops. It's no good asking about them because we're not even quite sure what yet we're going to do ourselves. But we want to do some more intensive workshops, and we also want to get to some of the more remote places where the community may be few and far between, but they can't make it here, and they want us there.

Gavin: We haven't had a chance to get out to Western Australia or Southern Australia. One of the things we want to work on is a project on what we call "a-traditional Wicca." And it's about creating your own traditions and we're working on that at the moment, we may bring that over here.

Tony: Just in closing, is there anything else you'd like to say to our readers?

Gavin: I nearly came out with "keeping banging the rocks together, guys!" [laughter] That Wicca is principally about spirituality - this is about a series of religious practices which are connected with the environment you live in, and basically connecting with

spirit through that environment. And you can't be a witch unless you do that. At the end of the day, it is about making the world a better place. And if your spiritual practices aren't making the world a better place, then you're doing something wrong. ❖



Tony Mierzwicki is the author of *Graeco-Egyptian Magick: Everyday Empowerment* and a forthcoming primer reconstructing Classical Greek religion. He has presented workshops recreating ancient magickal practices in the United States and the east coast of Australia since 2001, drawing on his practice of ceremonial magick which he began in 1990. Tony's wife, Jo-Ann, has been co-facilitating his workshops since 2004.

Tony completed three degrees at the University of Sydney - MA, BE and BSc. He is on the Board of Directors of Cherry Hill Seminary.



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Journey scarce set to,
Along a winding path-
Now smoother, then a rock-strewn,
Steep, cragged, dark-wooded
Narrow-
Barely by my eyes detected!
I follow in footprints yielded by
Ancestors who, through Time immemorial,
Set theirs upon; an eternal passage,
Paved by hearts together bound as one in
Singular desire to abide gently 'neath the
Stars and beside th' sea.
Old mysteries await; concealed – hidden in sight!
Waiting knowledge that rests within time
Which spans from eon to eon;
Truth whispered soft to children fast asleep under a full moon's
Shadowy silver light;
Upon whose tender dreams they rest, as a feather would
Await a sudden gust, in the hope of one tomorrow
Soaring to the heavens.
Open our minds to the possible,
Our hearts, the new and strange familiar.
Songs from sacred wells enchanted still;
An' yet, our souls open to your lore
As ye shall so share in Ye own time.
Oh Noble Ones,
Help us weather the times of greatest trials-
So, too, those uplifting.
Reveal the Paths;
Tip Cauldrons at the right.
Hail to All!

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